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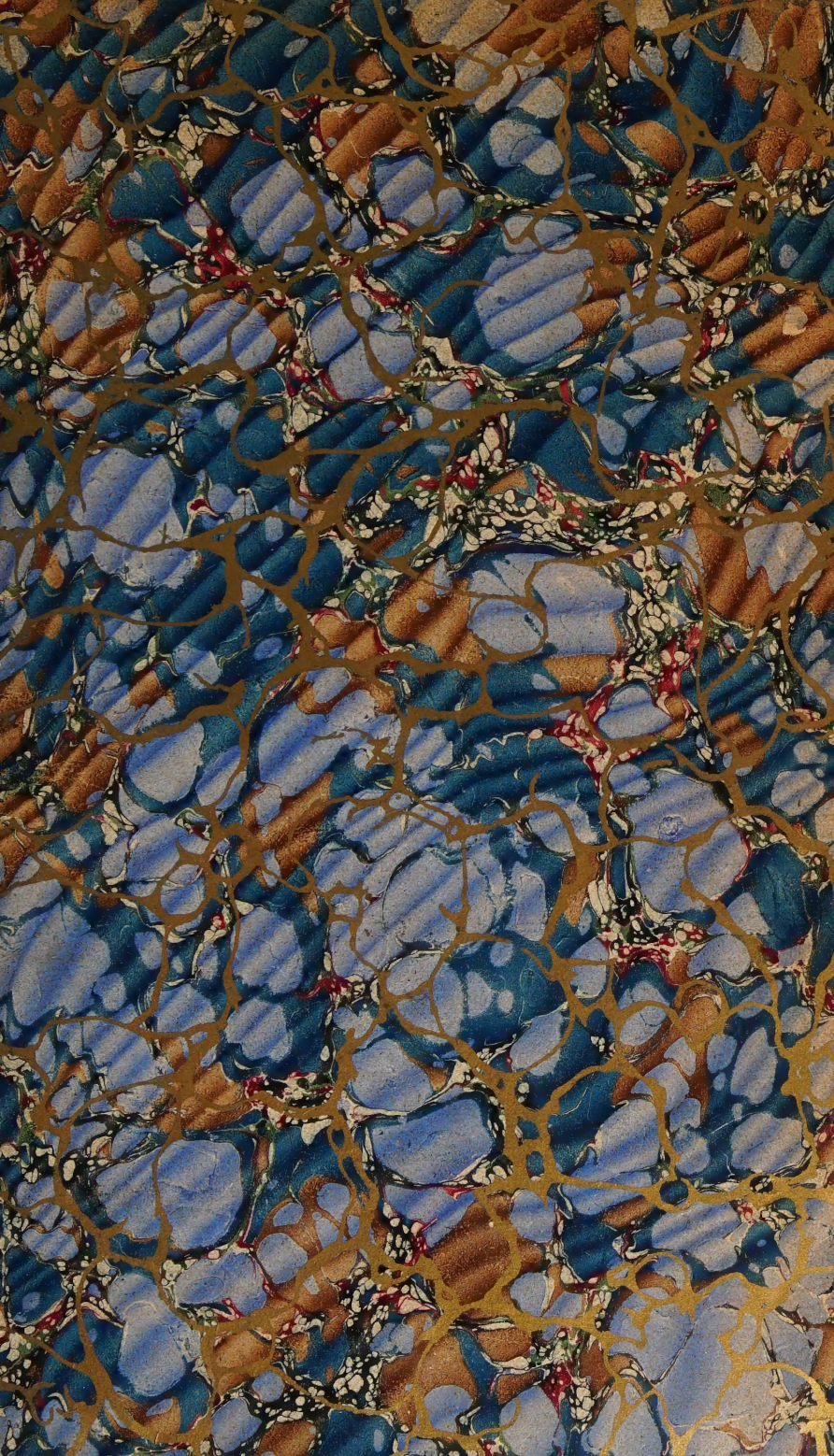

The Early Years of Christianity, v.2
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THE MARTYRS AND APOLOGISTS.

BY

E. DE PRESSENSÉ, D.D.,

Author of "Jesus Christ: His Times, Life, and Work."

TRANSLATED BY

ANNIE HARWOOD.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

THIS Volume—"Martyrs and Apologists"—now presented to the English public as a part of Dr. Pressensé's great work, "The Early Years of Christianity," has been carefully prepared for this translation by the Author himself. In the revision of the sheets for the Press, and in the compilation of the Indices, I am indebted to the help of friends more competent than myself in matters requiring scholarly knowledge. If, in spite of the care taken, some blemishes and errors still remain, I yet venture to ask, for the Author's sake, the kindness of a candid criticism.

ANNIE HARWOOD.

GREAT SHELFORD, CAMBRIDGE,
March 29th, 1871.

PREFACE.

THIS Volume, like the preceding, has been specially prepared for the English Edition. Divided into three sections, it yet forms one whole, for its one theme is the great conflict of Primitive Christianity with Paganism.

The first section gives the narrative of the missions and persecutions of the Church; the second treats of its most illustrious representatives, and brings out their distinctive characteristics; it is entitled "The Fathers of the Church of the Second and Third Centuries." The third section describes the great controversial conflict of Christianity, and contains a complete outline of the Apology of the Early Church.

The Volume which is to follow will have for its subject Heresy and the Faith; and the work will conclude with the exposition of the religious and ecclesiastical life of that age of fervour and of freedom.

The Author has spared no labour over this book, and has uniformly derived his statements from the original sources.

He esteems it an honour to see his work presented to the religious public of England in a translation executed with so much care and ability.

EDMOND DE PRESSENSÉ.

PARIS, 1870.

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THE

EARLY YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOOK FIRST.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND PAGAN PERSECUTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONQUESTS OF THE CHURCH.*

§ I. *Character and Method of early Christian Missions.*

We have described the rapid growth of Christianity in its infancy; we have recorded that steady forward march of the Church which no obstacle could impede, no danger daunt. Under the leadership of its invisible Head, it went forth without trembling, to meet adversaries at once skilful and strong, and as numerous as formidable—to encounter, in fact, all the recognised lords of the world, its princes and priests, its philosophers and artists. Every conflict became a victory,

* In addition to the original sources and the great ecclesiastical histories already mentioned, we shall quote from Mosheim, "De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum," pp. 203-448; Fabricius, "Salutaris lux Evangelii toto orbi per divinam gratiam exoriens;" "Histoire Générale de l'Etablissement du Christianisme," translated from the German of C. G. Blumhardt, by A. Bost, vol. I.

and the only effect of persecution was to extend the missionary field of the Church, to give greater weight to its testimony, and to command for it a wider hearing. We have seen the Church at Jerusalem, formed but of yesterday, and still dimly enlightened on more than one point, making head against the fiercest storm, and finding, in the enforced dispersion of its members, a most valuable means of propagating the faith. The barrier raised by Jewish prejudice between the Church and the pagan world falls at the voice of St. Paul, and in the first impulse of their new-born zeal, its emissaries at once go far and wide over the vast field thus opened to Christian labour. The Gospel is spread over the whole of Asia Minor; it reaches the borders of India, penetrates the deserts of Arabia, and touches the heart of Egyptian Africa. The great Apostle and his companions carry it into Greece—into the great centres of ancient civilisation. It echoes in the very capital of the empire. Everywhere flourishing Churches flame like beacons through the darkness of pagan night. In the period which follows, the Church retraces its steps over this vast field, deepening the furrows and scattering the seed more widely. Asia Minor, in particular, is made to feel the power of Christianity under the influence of those great bishops, who, like Polycarp and Ignatius, seal a heroic ministry with a martyr's death.

In the period which we are now approaching, and which comprehends the second and third centuries of our era, this expansive movement goes on yet more rapidly and irresistibly. Christianity extends its conquests to the utmost limits of the Roman Empire, and at several points even passes beyond it. Although a

certain exaggeration is no doubt apparent in the language of the apologists of the Church, who seek to demonstrate the truth of the Gospel by the greatness of its success, it is yet abundantly evident from their writings that those successes were real, and very remarkable. "There is not," says Justin Martyr, "a single race of men, barbarians, Greeks, or by whatever name they may be called, warlike or nomadic, homeless or dwelling in tents, or leading a pastoral life, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered in the name of Jesus the crucified, to the Father and Creator of all things."* Irenæus writes subsequently: "Such is the common faith and tradition of the Churches of Germany, Iberia, and of the Celts, as well as of those of the East, of Egypt, of Libya, and of the centre of the world."† Tertullian, with his usual fervour, exclaims: "In whom have all the nations believed, but in the Christ who is already come? In Him believe the Parthians, the Medes, the Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, in Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya beyond Cyrene, inhabitants of Rome, Jews, and proselytes. This is the faith of the several tribes of the Getulians, the Moors, the Spaniards, and the various nations of Gaul. The parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans, but subject to Jesus Christ, hold the same faith, as do also the Sarmatians, the Dacians, the Germans, the Scythians, and many other

* Οὐδὲ ἓν γὰρ ὅλως ἐστὶ τὸ γένος ἀνθρωπων ἐν οἷς μὴ δία τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ σταυρωθέντος Ἰησοῦ εὐχαὶ καὶ εὐχαριστίαι. (Justin Martyr, "Dial. cum Tryph.," p. 345. Paris edition, 1636.)

† Irenæus, "Contr. Hæres.," I., 3. (Feuardentius edition.)

nations in provinces and islands unknown to us, and which we must fail to enumerate."*

Making large allowance for the rhetorical colouring of such assertions, it is yet impossible to question that they attest a truly marvellous diffusion of the new religion. Nor is it only the arena of missionary activity which is thus indefinitely enlarged; the sphere is occupied, and the missionary work is no less admirable, regarded from within than from without. "We are but of yesterday," says this same Tertullian in a passage which has become classical, "and lo! we fill the whole empire,—your cities, your islands, your fortresses, your municipalities, your councils, nay, even the camp, the tribune, the decury, the palace, the senate, the forum."†

This rapid survey of the conquests of Christianity at this period not will suffice. We shall need to pass under review in detail the origin of the principal Churches of the East and West, of those which became either important centres of the faith, or the advanced posts of new beliefs. We must first inquire, however, by what means these great successes were obtained, what were the obstacles, and what the aids to early missionary activity.‡

We shall not dwell again on that which we have

* "Etiam Getulorum varietates, et Maurorum multi fines, Hispaniarum omnes termini et Galliarum diversæ nationes, et Sarmatorum, Dacorum et Germanorum et Scytharum . . ." (Tertullian, "Adv. Judæos," c. vii.)

† "Hesterni sumus et vestras omnes implevimus urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum." (Tertullian, "Apol.," c. xxxvii.)

‡ See on this point Neander's "Church History," vol. I. pp. 60-72. Eng. Trans., Bohn's Ed., vol. I. pp. 95-108.

already observed—the reproach brought upon Christianity by the lowliness of its origin, the poverty of its apostles, and the simplicity of its worship. We shall have occasion more than once to allude to this, when setting forth the defence presented in its name by its apologists. Sprung out of Judæa, born of a haughty and detested people, who met the scorn of the world with a yet more bitter scorn, Christianity, while it was rejected and reviled by the Jews, shared nevertheless in the odium attached to Judaism. It was thus in the anomalous position of bearing the reproach of the synagogue as if identified with it, while at the same time it found in the synagogue its most malignant and implacable foe. It is true that as we advance in the history of the Church, we shall find this misconception gradually dispelled; but it was of much longer duration than could have been at first supposed. The simplicity of the Christian worship—so remarkable at this period, when it had cast off the Jewish ritual, and had not, as yet, sought any new ceremonial; the adoration of the invisible without symbolic aid; the absence of any temples—a fact not to be ascribed solely to the danger of persecution, but which represented a principle; the bold spirituality, which grasped the idea of worship in spirit and in truth as so grand a reality; all these characteristics of the new religion were of a nature to scandalise and irritate, by the force of contrast, a world given to idolatry. To the votaries of a materialistic religion, who recognise only the gods that walk before men's eyes, spirituality is atheism. Unable to rise to the spiritual, the simplest method is to deny it. For such souls, where there is no

idol, there is no God. It was natural then that the Christians should be classed among the impious, by the worshippers of Jupiter and Venus. We have already mentioned the infamous calumnies which attempted to brand the worship of the Church by travestying its most sacred mysteries. We shall presently see how these false accusations were flung back, by the defenders of the Church, with words of burning eloquence, in the face of the adversaries and their feeble gods.

But the grand obstacle to Christian missions was the universal moral corruption, which was ever developing itself in new forms in a world, the very foundations of which were unsound. With no fixed beliefs, with no faith in the future, the society of that age abandoned itself to a materialism as daring as it was desperate. Nothing could be more corrupting to the spirit than this purely sensuous life, facilitated by all the resources of a powerful and refined society, to which nothing was wanting but fixed principles and a steadfast purpose. To secure diversion in the narrow span between birth and death, to extract the largest possible amount of enjoyment from a precarious existence, this is the great aim of such a life ; the feverish restlessness which accompanies it only gives an added stimulus to voluptuous excess. We have endeavoured to describe the fatal fascination to which decrepit paganism yielded at the commencement of our era. The writers of the second and third centuries show us how the life of the senses had become yet more completely dominant. The pagan, according to the powerful language of Clement of Alexandria, drank in voluptuousness through

every sense.* Voluptuousness adorned his dwelling with unchaste images, it inspired the syren music of his feasts, it reigned supreme in the theatre. It mingled with the blood in his veins. "Like the syren of the Odyssey," says Clement in another place, "it sends forth a seductive sound; but the waters on to which it lures the listener flow over hidden fire. The indulgence of sensuality has become universal, and its effect is to destroy the man and keep him from the truth."† "You hear that voice," again he exclaims; "O mariner, you hear it; and it pleases you.‡ Pass away from it; shut your ears against its deathful music. If you will, you may escape, only bind yourself to the Saving raft."§ But this raft was the cross—the cross which represented the voluntary self-sacrifice of the Christian, no less than that of the Redeemer. This alone reveals what a gulf the voluptuous pagan had to cross, before he could enroll himself beneath such a standard.

There was yet another form of the voluptuous, more refined than the merely sensual, which alienated many minds from Christianity. This was that extravagant love of beauty of form, which had always distinguished the Hellenic race, and which it had imparted to the degenerate Romans. In an age of decadence, the form of the idea is esteemed far more highly than the idea itself. The surfeited soul, like the surfeited palate, craves the piquant, the highly dressed. Sim-

* Clement of Alexandria, "Protrept.," c. iv. § 61.

† *Ἄγχει τὸν ἄνθρωπον, τῆς ἀληθείας ἀποτρέπει.* (Clement of Alexandria, "Protrept.," c. xii. § 116.)

‡ *Ἐπαινεῖσε, ὦ ναῦτα.* (Clement of Alexandria, "Protrept.," c. xii. § 116.)

§ *Τῷ ξύλῳ προσδεδεμένος.* (Ibid.)

plicity of expression excites only contempt, and the noblest thoughts pass unheeded unless surcharged with ornament. The Fathers of the Church have repeatedly pointed out this intellectual epicurism, as one of the great obstacles to the progress of Christianity. The noble language of the pagan philosophers seemed to Justin Martyr a bait, which would decoy many souls to death.* Celsus, the great opponent of Christianity, heaps his most biting sarcasms on the vulgarity of the form, by which, according to him, truth is degraded in the Gospel; on the incorrectness and barbarism of the style of the sacred writings, and on their want of logical force. While in order to sustain his argument he exaggerates the somewhat bald simplicity of the apostolic writings, he yet faithfully represents the natural repugnance of the Hellenic race to a book, which, like the lowly Redeemer whom it revealed to the world, made no pretence to the glory or excellency of human wisdom. Greece had drunk draughts too intoxicating to appreciate the purity of the living water. Those only who were thirsting for pardon and peace, drew near to the Divine fountain. It had no charm for the epicureans of philosophy and art.

To these general causes of aversion to Christianity may be added others, which were peculiar to the age of which we are about to speak. We shall find the paganism of the second and third centuries of our era, assuming more and more a character of gloomy and fierce fanaticism. A desperate effort was unquestionably made at this period to revive old religious beliefs.

* "Ωσπερ δελεαρ τῆν εῦγλωττιαν. (Justin, "Ad. Græc. Cohortatio," p. 44.)

The incredulity which at one time, as we have noted, came in like a flood, could not long maintain its ground against the power of superstition. Superstition spreads from class to class, and from the lowest stratum of the ignorant populace, it rises to the elevated sphere where philosophy and science have long reigned alone. Philosophers and lettered men cannot resist the stream. Alexandria becomes the centre of this reaction of paganism. It is not certain old religious forms which are revived; it is the old religion of the old world surviving in its essence the decay of its various embodiments. Nature becomes the supreme object of worship—Nature, the mysterious Isis, before whom for so many ages the whole East has bowed down. Rising above Hellenic humanism to the sublime pantheism of India, borrowing its asceticism and mysticism to set in the scale against Christian piety, the pagan reaction succeeds in baffling the aspirations of more than one noble soul. In its popular form it misleads the people by mere trickery. It inspires unlimited confidence in the hidden forces of nature, and makes the multitude more and more the dupe of magicians, who gratify the taste for the marvellous, and promise deliverance from physical evils without demanding any moral reformation. Magic opposes its false miracles to the true miracles of Christianity, and thus holds the many enchained at the foot of those very altars, which, a century before, seemed to totter at the mere touch of a new faith. This religion without morality, which gratifies all the evil inclinations, while it frustrates all the true instincts of man's nature, will resist Christianity with weapons worthy of itself. It will stir up

the fierce passions of the multitude, and lash them into blind and frenzied fury. It will stimulate that thirst for blood, which seizes men as it does savage beasts when they have once tasted it; it will feed, by the cruel sports of the amphitheatre, the fierce delight in human agony.

Christianity had, as we know, powerful influences to bring to bear on these obstacles, apart from the intrinsic force of truth.

The element of strangeness, of absolute novelty which it presented in a state of society so profoundly corrupt, made it the rallying point of sympathies as strong as were the hostile feelings it awakened; while the very opposition which it encountered served to sustain its severe morality, and to preserve it from the enervation of compromise. It thus retained its originality, and its sublime ideal gleamed in lofty purity above the encompassing darkness. It seemed still like one coming up out of the wilderness. The sharp contrast between the Church and the whole life around it, could scarcely fail to arrest the attention of the most thoughtless. The Church might be spoken against, it could hardly be despised; and souls, wearied with the vices of paganism, naturally fled, to lay hold of this new hope. The Church was the city of refuge, built upon a hill, with gates open to all, in whom there had arisen a thirst after the divine. Whether in hatred or in love, all eyes were drawn towards it by its moral elevation; and the very hatred of its enemies became of service to it, by calling into demonstration the power of its faith. The steadfast witness of the Church—might we not rather say its martyrdom—during three centuries, brought to light an assurance so immoveable of the

possession of the truth, that souls, weary of doubt, and craving after a settled belief, were irresistibly attracted by it. Hence that eloquence of the martyr's death of which Tertullian speaks. We shall see how powerful was the apology of the circus and the stake throughout the whole of this period, especially with the sublime commentary added by the great defenders of the faith. In the resignation of an innocent victim there is ever a mysterious attraction. The meekness of the martyr's gaze is more terrible to bear than the flashes of hatred or the fire of wrath. If the cross, presented to the adoration of the world, was one of the great stumbling-blocks of primitive Christianity, it was also one of its mightiest influences. The dying God won from men's hearts that which had been withheld from the awful God of Sinai; and the Church achieved its most glorious victories in the days of its most complete self-sacrifice. To use the figure of Justin Martyr, it was like a vine which is the more fruitful the more it bleeds under the pruning knife.*

If suffering was thus a powerful argument advancing the cause of Christianity, the joy of the Christians—their pure and lively joy in having found the truth—pleaded no less effectually. Clement of Alexandria, speaking of this blessed illumination of conversion as set forth in baptism, says: "We are like those who awake out of a deep sleep, or rather, like those from whose eyes a film has fallen. They see all things clearly, not because there is more light without (over which they have no control), but because from their own vision the darkening veil is gone. The eye of our souls has become strong and clear; the Holy Ghost

* Justin Martyr, "Dial. cum Tryph.," p. 337.

comes down upon us, and we discern the things which are of God."* Such joy could not be hidden in the heart, and the famous "Eureka" of Archimedes, applied to the grandest of truths, sounded from end to end of the empire, wherever the light of the Gospel had penetrated. This lively joy, awakened by the discovery of truth, is expressed with great beauty in one of the symbolic representations, found in the catacombs or on the tombs of the early Christians. It depicts the rock smitten by Moses, suddenly opening and sending forth a stream of pure water, which flows over the desert sands. The painting is rude, but there is an indescribable beauty in the expression of the Israelites rushing to the fountain. Every feature bespeaks holy eagerness, unutterable joy, and they drink in long draughts, that which is indeed to them the water of life. The symbol is easy of interpretation. The first Christians sought thus to set forth the joy unspeakable of having seen the fountain of divine life opened in a desert, a thousand times more waste and arid than that crossed by the Israelites. The deep thirst of their souls, and the gladness realised, equalling and surpassing all that they had suffered—all this is conveyed in these rude paintings and sculptures, with a freshness and force which make them precious records of the faith of the first centuries. They do more than many learned dissertations to explain the rapid spread of Christianity in primitive times.

In spite of all the obstacles we have enumerated, Christian missions found more than one element of support in the condition of men's minds in that age of

* "Ωσπερ οἱ τὸν ὕπνον ἀποσεισάμενοι εὐθέως ἐγρηγόρασιν. (Clement of Alexandria, "Pædagog.," book I. c. vi. § 28.)

decadence. The reaction in favour of paganism was not the only current carrying men along. Many thoughtful minds estimated it at its true value, and wearied of creeds so full of emptiness, showed themselves disposed to accept Christianity. Such a disposition of mind was not confined to the higher classes; unlettered men and women, the poor, and all those who were placed under the ban of the old society, all those too who were bowed down under the burden of its vices, felt drawn towards the Church; and it was one of the great elements of power in the new religion that it addressed itself specially to such, and offered to them a doctrine so simple as to be within the reach of all. Its very motto might have been those touching words of the Master, "Suffer the little ones to come unto me." The adaptation of Christianity to the popular mind, with which it was bitterly reproached by pagan philosophers accustomed to close the doors of their schools against the *profanum vulgus*, gave it access to the humblest quarters. "We boldly avow," said Origen, "that it is our design to educate all men in the school of the Divine Word, so that the youngest may find instruction suited to them, and the very slave may learn how, in receiving freedom of the soul, he may be made free indeed. We Christians hold ourselves debtors alike to the Greeks and barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise. It is our aim, that every creature gifted with reason may be healed by the virtue of the Word, and be brought into friendship with God."* "Not

* Οἱ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν πρεσβεύοντες τὸν χριστιανισμὸν ἱκανῶς φάσιν ὀφειλέται εἶναι Ελλήσι καί βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς καὶ ἀνοήτοις. (Origen, "Contr. Cels.," III., c. liv.)

only the rich," says Tatian, "but the poor are found among the scholars of our philosophy, and we ask nothing at their hands. We admit as hearers all who are willing to come—even women old and young. Our modest maidens talk of divine things as they turn the spinning wheel."*

It naturally follows from the fact that the new religion thus addressed itself especially to the poor and the ignorant, that the spoken word should occupy a more important place than the written, in the history of early missions. That it did so is evident from the declaration of Irenæus, that many barbarous tribes have salvation written in their heart, but without ink or paper.† These barbarous tribes were not all beyond the bounds of the empire. Copies of the Holy Scriptures were at this time rare and costly, inaccessible therefore to the unlettered classes of society. Once admitted into the Church, the poorest could indeed hear the Scriptures read; but the truth first reached them in the form of animated narrative or fervent appeal. It is easy to conceive how many of the errors which became current in the stream of oral tradition may have been transmitted to the new converts, especially those of the lower classes, through the same medium which conveyed to them the grand truths of Christianity.

It was chiefly among the ignorant and the common people that the artifices of the magicians found dupes.

* Tatian, "Contr. Græcos," pp. 167, 168.

† "Multæ gentes Barbarorum sine charta et atramento scriptam habentes per Spiritum in cordibus suis salutem." (Irenæus, "Contr. Hæres.," III. p. 4.)

We see from the romance of Apuleius how much credit the magicians had among the people. In opposition to their false miracles, the Church could show miracles which were true, and supernatural events such as had signalised the first days of missions were still repeated, though with less and less frequency. The clear and unanimous testimony of the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries, leaves no room to doubt the continuance of miraculous power in the Church of that period. Irenæus and Tertullian speak of miraculous cures effected by Christians, and even of persons being raised from the dead. "That some cast out devils," says Irenæus, "is a matter that cannot be called in question, since it is attested by the experience of those who have been thus delivered, and are now in the Church. Others have the gift of foretelling the future, see visions, and speak prophetic words; others effect cures by laying their hands on the sick."* "Often," says the same Father, "the life of a man has been granted to the prayers of the faithful." †

Tertullian relates that Septimus Severus was healed of a serious disease by a Christian, who, following the practical directions of James, had prayed over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the grateful emperor gave him a home in the palace to the end of his life.‡ Origen mentions miraculous cures wrought in the Church of his time. He says: "There are still among Christians, traces of that Holy Spirit who appeared in the form of a dove. They cast out

* Irenæus, "Contr. Hæres.," II. p. 57.

† *Ἐχαρίσθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ταῖς εὐχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων.* (Ibid. II. p. 31.)

‡ Tertullian, "Ad Scapulam," c. iv.

devils, heal the sick, and, subject to the good pleasure of the Word, foresee the future."*

Thus the continuance of miracles in the Church of the first three centuries is guaranteed by the most authentic tradition. To those who admit the supernatural element in Christianity, the fact presents nothing abnormal. There was no deep gulf placed between the apostolic and following ages. The first era of the Church did not end with a sharp line of demarcation; miracles did not cease with the last of the apostles. They were perpetuated for the very simple reason, that the circumstances which had called for them remained the same. They were designed to mark, in a visible manner, and by an impressive symbol, the extraordinary and supernatural character of Christianity; they were specially appropriate to the period of the Church's creation and formation, and had an important purpose yet to fulfil in the terrible struggle of the second and third centuries—that great crisis of the moral world, when all the powers of darkness seemed abroad. It is perfectly conceivable that the miraculous element may again appear in parallel seasons of convulsion and of final conflict between the kingdom of evil and the kingdom of good.

There is, however, a notable diminution in the proportion of outward miracle or prodigy as the Church advances in years, and we have already marked its gradual decrease even in the apostolic age. The ideal of the Church's life is not the predominance of the supernatural, but the intimate and complete union of

* Ἐξάγουσι δαιμόνας καὶ πολλὰς ἰάσεις ἐπιτελοῦσι καὶ ὁρῶσι περὶ μελλόντων. (Origen, Delarue edit., I. p. 311., comp. pp. 321–392.)

the human and the divine. The gradual cessation of miraculous power is recognised by the Fathers. Origen asserts that only a few traces of the supernatural operation of the Divine Spirit remain. "The signs of the Holy Ghost," he says, "showed themselves from the commencement of the ministry of Christ; they were multiplied after His ascension, and subsequently diminished. *Some vestiges of them* still remain among men."* Notwithstanding this avowal, we are constrained to admit that Origen and his contemporaries exaggerated to themselves the number of miracles wrought in their day. They wrote in perfect good faith, but were misled, undoubtedly, by certain superstitious notions which blended with their noble faith. When, for example, they attribute a power of healing to the simple reading of the holy books, and the invocation of the name of Jesus, they lower miracle to the rank of magic, and become believers in incantations and cabalistic formularies.†

The miracles most often mentioned by the writers of the time are those wrought on demoniacs. Justin Martyr speaks of a great number of these unhappy beings, over whom all the heathen exorcists had had no power, and who were delivered through the invocation of the name of Christ.‡ Tertullian describes, with his vivid imagination, these scenes of exorcism. He says: "Call before your tribunals a man known to be possessed; any Christian will compel the spirit to confess honestly that he is a demon, even though he

* Ἔτι ἴχνη. (Origen, I. p. 36.) Καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἴχνη ἐστὶν παῤ ὀλίγοις. (Ibid., p. 700.)

† Origen, I. p. 461.

‡ Justin Martyr, "Apol.," I. p. 45.

may have elsewhere falsely pretended to be a god. Bring, in the same manner, one in whom is supposed to be the spirit of a god, who, bending open-mouthed over the smoking altars, has breathed in the divinity. . . Be it the Virgin Cœlestis, goddess of the rain, or Esculapius, the inventor of medicine—if (since they dare not lie to a Christian), they fail to confess that they are demons, shed upon the spot the blood of that daring Christian."* This bold supposition is evidently founded on positive facts, traces of which may be found in other writings of Tertullian.† After reading such passages, the conclusion is inevitable, that many superstitious notions about evil spirits were then accepted in the Church, which took up the current beliefs of that time, only modifying them in part by its own doctrines. The passage which we have quoted from Tertullian is conclusive on this point. He represents both pagans and Christians as agreed respecting the nature of the visitation, both treating it as a possession, and essaying with unequal success the cure of the demoniac. The phantoms called up by popular superstition, in a time of universal crisis, haunt the noblest spirits, and they cannot escape their influence. The Christians of that age unhesitatingly recognise as evil spirits all the false gods of paganism, and thus give credence to the fables of old Greco-Roman mythology. They unduly extend the doctrine of evil angels, and go far beyond the teaching of the sacred writings. We

* "Edatur hic aliquis sub tribunalibus vestris, quem dæmone agi constet, jussus a quolibet Christiano loqui, spiritus ille, tam se dæmonem confitebitur de vero quam alibi deum de falso." (Tertullian, "Apol.," c. xxiii.)

† "Ad Scapul.," II. See Origen, I. p. 471.

shall see to what a fanciful demonology they were led in their theology, by their deep conviction of the greatness of the conflict waged by them against the powers of evil. The Christians of the East shared on these points the erroneous notions of the Western Christians. Justin Martyr and Origen are in harmony with Tertullian on the subject of the power of evil spirits; they behold them everywhere, and the great Alexandrine does not hesitate to speak of them as the ministers of the Divine judgments. It is not surprising that men, thus prepared to see demons where they are not, should multiply indefinitely the instances of exorcism. Every case of madness they regard as a possession; melancholy, despair—all come under the same designation, and instances of moral healing, which are fully explicable by the virtue of the Gospel consolations, pass for miraculous cures. The sufferers themselves share the common superstition, and their malady becomes to them a supernatural and awful visitation. In such a heated atmosphere, terrible hallucinations were sure to arise.

In short, miraculous gifts have not, at this era, disappeared from the Church, but they are of increasing rarity, more rare even than the Christians themselves suppose, incapable as they are, as yet, of discerning between the really miraculous, and miracles created by the imagination. It would be most unjust to confound the miracles of the Gospel with the pseudo-miracles born of a heated brain. The mere comparison makes apparent the wide difference between them. On the one side, all is simplicity, strength, soberness; the miracle has always a moral aspect; faith alone comes into operation; there is no approach to incanta-

tion, or any mystic formulary. On the other side, an excited imagination plays the foremost part, and the influence of popular superstitions is clearly discernible. The great apologists of Christianity are themselves sensible of this inferiority, and we shall find Origen treating miracles rather as the subjects of proof than as themselves adequate proof of any doctrine not otherwise verified, since such arguments can be brought forward in support of the false, no less than of the true.

Having thus glanced at the obstacles which Christianity encountered in the ancient world, and also at the points of contact which it found with the men of that age, we shall proceed to examine the mode of operation, and the means employed in the propagation of the Gospel. We observe, first, that the work was not done through any fixed organisation. We shall not find in the Church of the second and third centuries, any of those great missionary associations which form so important a part of modern Christian agency, for the simple reason that the whole Church was then essentially a missionary society. A stranger and a sojourner rather than a settler in the world, hard pressed on all hands by surrounding paganism, its very life was one long conflict; it must fight in self-defence, and conquer or die. There was no distinction then between home and foreign missions; the Christian had but to cross his own threshold, and walk the public streets of his own city, and he found a pagan people at his own door to be converted. The whole civilisation of the empire was the creation of paganism; there was therefore no delusive veil, such as is too often drawn over the true state of the heart by modern civilisation, in which

the presence of some Christian elements suffices to conceal from superficial observers, the undying paganism of a world at enmity with God. In the cultivated citizen of Rome or Alexandria, the Church saw only a pagan, harder to convert than a barbarian of Scythia or Germany, because more skilful in eluding the truth. Thus, every Church was a mission-centre, radiating Gospel light far and near. Missionaries were not subjected, any more than pastors or bishops, to any course of special training. Their aptitude for the work was tested, and they were chosen when they gave clear evidence of their vocation. It was thus Origen was delegated by the Church of Alexandria to carry the Gospel into Arabia, at the invitation of the governor of that distant country, who had embraced Christianity.* Before him, Pantænus, the famous teacher of Clement, had long preached in India.† A new mission generally arose out of some incidental circumstance, and wherever a Christian set his foot, however barren the soil, there he planted the Cross, and gathered around him the nucleus of a Church. We have testimony that cannot be contravened—since it comes from an enemy—to the spontaneity of missionary zeal in the early Church. "Many of the Christians," writes Celsus, "without any special calling, watch for all opportunities, and both within and without the temples, boldly proclaim their faith; they find their way into the cities, and the armies, and there having called the people together, harangue them with fanatical gestures."‡

* Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. VI. c. 19. † Ibid, Bk. V. c. 10.

‡ Πολλοὶ καὶ ἀνώνυμοι ῥᾶστα ἐκ τῆς προστυχούσης αἰτίας, καὶ ἐν ἱεροῖς ἢ ἔξω ἱερῶν, οἱ δε καὶ ἀγείραντες καὶ ἐπιφοιτεύοντης πόλεσιν ἢ στρατοπεδοις, κινοῦνται ὡς θεσπίζοντες. (Origen, "Contr. Cels.," VII. 9.)

Christianity was carried from Asia Minor to Lyons, through the commercial relations between that rich city of the Gauls, and the opulent provinces of Asia. It was taken into Germany by some prisoners of war; and, at the close of a fierce persecution which scattered the Christians of Alexandria, a Church was founded by the fugitives in the neighbouring countries. Everything was free and spontaneous in the great chain of Christian victories, which after two centuries enclosed the empire as in a vast network. The natural relations of life aided the work of proselytism. A new convert became the missionary of his family. The most humble were often the most powerful; it was an obscure old man who gave Justin Martyr to the Church. The account of his conversion, given us by that illustrious teacher, shows what was the holy boldness and skill of these voluntary and self-constituted missionaries. As Justin was wandering along the sea-shore, seeking to calm the troubles of his spirit, wearied with the vain search he had made for truth from land to land, he met an old man of venerable aspect. The stranger read the lines of sorrow and anxious thought upon Justin's face, and asked him what he was seeking in so lonely a place. "I delight," replied Justin, "in such quiet wanderings, where nothing comes to disturb my inward musings. This wilderness suits well with philosophic meditation." "You are then," responded the old man, "a lover of knowledge only; you love not virtue nor truth. You are but a sophist, and have never tried to act."* This dart, aimed by a sure hand, and guided

* Φιλολόγος οὖν τις σὺ, φίλεργος δε οὐδαμῶς, οὐδὲ φίλαλήθης. (St. Just, "Dial. cum Tryph.," p. 220.)

by the divination of love, sank into the unquiet conscience; the intercourse was carried on in the same earnest vein, and terminated, as we have said, in the conversion of Justin.

The Christians made use of all the facilities offered them. The customs of ancient society were more adapted than those of modern life for public discussions and free converse. Life, so to speak, opened freely to the sun, under the beautiful southern sky. The public square was the common meeting-place of the whole community; there, were gathered the idlers, the curious, and the spirits eager for novelty, like the Athenians in the time of St. Paul. There the philosopher, wrapped in his mantle, soon drew around him an attentive crowd; and the Christian, ready "to be all things to all men," there unfolded the mysteries of his divine philosophy. Public discussions were a recognised custom of society. Origen, in his book against Celsus, speaks of a conference which he had had with some Jews, and which appears to have been conducted in all due form, with judges of the debate.* It was after such a discussion at Rome, with the philosopher Crescens, that Justin Martyr was put to death.† We know that the ancient philosophers loved to teach in the presence of the beauties of nature. This custom was peculiarly adapted to aid the propagation of the faith. Many of the apologetic writings of these early days, arose out of free discussions held in the open country. They might be

* *Ἐν τινι πρὸς Ἰουδαίων λεγομένους σοφοῦς διαλεξει, πλειόνων κρινόντων τὸ λεγόμενον.* (Origen, I. p. 360. See also p. 370.)

† Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. IV. c. 16.

called the Christian *Tusculana*. The dialogue with Trypho took place on a seat in the covered portico, under which athletes used to exercise.* The "Octavius" of Minutius Felix commences thus:—"We arranged to go to Ostia, an enchanting spot. . . . The vacation had come, and the pleasures of the vintage time took the place of the toils of the bar. After the burning summer, had come the tempered heat of autumn. We turned our steps one morning, soon after dawn, towards the sea-shore, to breathe the pure, life-giving air, and to enjoy the pleasant sensation of treading the soft, yielding sand. Talking as we went, we crossed the town and came to the beach. Tiny waves were playing over it as if to smooth it for our tread. And as the sea, even when the winds are silent, is still a little stirred, and even when it does not rush upon the shore in floods of snowy foam, yet heaves and breaks in wavelets on the sand, we found a keen delight in letting it reach us in its playful attacks as we stood by the water's edge. Now the tide played around our feet; now it drew back into itself, as if it would return to the bosom of the great sea. Slowly we wandered along the winding margin, beguiling the length of the way by the charm of conversation."† This simple picture reminds one of the introduction to Plato's "Phædon." Cyprian's treatise opens with a description of the same kind addressed to Donatus. "We have a sure retreat at hand," he says, "in the quiet country near us. A vine climbing along the supporting wood-work, festoons its branches, and makes a green portico of leaves. How favourable a place for our

* Justin Martyr, p. 217. † Minutius Felix, "Octavius," II. III.

meditations together! While our eyes rejoice in the enchanting sight of these trees and vines, our souls shall at the same time be fed with converse."*

The Christians did not content themselves with these casual opportunities for intercourse; they also provided that a systematic exposition of Christianity, distinct from the regular preaching, should be given to the pagans who desired instruction in the truth. Thus was founded at Alexandria that great school to which we shall have such frequent occasion to refer, which, presenting its doctrines to the world through such men as Pantænus, Clement, and Origen, acquired extraordinary repute, and rallied around those illustrious teachers, not only the catechumens of the Church, but also a large number of pagans drawn together from all parts of the empire.† Antioch subsequently occupied the same position. These great Christian schools, which could hold comparison with the most brilliant centres of ancient philosophy, contributed effectually to gain credit for the new religion in high quarters.

By all these combined means Christianity made daily progress. It now remains for us to follow its apostles in their various spheres of fruitful labour.

§ II. *Progress of Christianity within the Empire and beyond it. Sketch of the different Churches. The Eastern Church.*

(*a*) *Conquests in Asia, in Greece, and in Eastern Africa.*

Asia was the cradle of Christianity; it was also the

* "Animum simul et auditus instruit et pascit oblectus." (Cyprian, "Ad Donat.," I.)

† Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. V. c. 10, 11.

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first mission-field, and we have already enumerated the flourishing Churches which were there founded in the first century. A valuable document enables us to trace with certainty the progress of the new religion during the course of the second and third centuries, even where exact statements from contemporary writers are wanting. The list of bishops who had a seat in the Council of Nicæa (which has been found more complete in a Syriac manuscript recently published), contains an enumeration of the Eastern Churches which sent representatives to these great ecclesiastical assemblies.*

This list shows us that in the countries where Christianity had been already planted, it gained many fresh conquests during this period, and that new Churches rose up around those of earlier date. This progress must have been very marked in Palestine, for that country had nineteen representatives at Nicæa. The Church of Jerusalem, after the rebuilding of that city by Adrian, was chiefly composed of pagan converts, as is shown by the names of the bishops mentioned by Eusebius. The more than ordinary respect and reputation which it enjoyed, were due rather to the sacred memories connected with its name than to its own influence; these did not, however, prevent its being eclipsed by a neighbouring Church. The town of Cæsarea, raised by Vespasian to the rank of a Roman colony and the residence of the procurators, was the true capital of the province.† At the commencement

* "Analecta Nicæna," fragments relating to the Council of Nicæa. The Syriac text, from an ancient MS. in the British Museum, with a translation, notes, &c., by B. Harris Cowper, 1857.

† "Hæc Judææ caput est." (Tacitus, "Historia," II. 79.)

of the fourth century, it possessed an important Church, of which Eusebius, the historian, was bishop, and which, until the Council of Chalcedon, was the metropolis of the province. To the north of Palestine, in Phœnicia, ten Churches are mentioned; among others those of Tyre and Sidon. Thus the empire of the purest spirituality had been established in these ancient centres of vile Phœnician naturalism. Twenty-two Churches of Cœlesyria sent delegates to Nicæa. Beside the familiar names of Antioch and Laodicea, we find those of many new Churches, revealing the progress of Christianity, as Larissa, near Cæsarea, and Lamosata, where arose that great discussion on the nature of Christ, which acquired such importance subsequently under the passionate treatment of Arius.

The Church of Antioch still preserved the high place which it attained in the previous era. The fruitful nursery of the first missionaries in the first century, and rendered illustrious at the commencement of the second by the martyrdom of Ignatius, it remained faithful to so glorious a past, and was regarded as the second metropolis of primitive Christianity.

There was not a single province of Asia Minor which had not been furrowed in every direction by Christian labourers, and where their mission had not gained some fruit. Cilicia sent eleven bishops to Nicæa, among whom we note the Bishop of Tarsus—the city of St. Paul—and of Mopsuestia. Cappadocia was represented by ten of its pastors. Tyana, rendered famous by the magician Apollonius, Comana, Cybistra, and many other cities, appeared in the list of the Council. Christianity had reached the shores of the Euxine, and

founded Churches in the provinces of Pontus and Paphlagonia. It had sent missionaries as far as the Hellespont, and into the regions where once was Troy —that country of which the very air was laden with the poetry of Homer. The cross had been planted in Lydia; around the celebrated Churches of Ephesus and Smyrna, of Thyatira and Philadelphia, were grouped a number of humbler Churches of more recent origin, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Pisidia, which had as many as ten bishops at Nicæa; Isauria, which had seventeen; Caria, which had five—all witness to the same result. The names of the bishops of Galatia show how far Christianity had made its way into the interior of the country. The islands bordering the coast of Asia,—Rhodes, Cos, Lemnos, Corcyra,—received the Gospel from the Continent; so likewise did the island of Cyprus, which had listened to it for the first time from the lips of Paul. Thus, in the very countries where paganism had reached its lowest depth of corruption, in that voluptuous land where religion had sanctioned and smiled on all forms of excess, the religion of most austere morality won its adherents by thousands, and gathered them around that symbol of utter self-sacrifice —the Cross—in the very presence of those gorgeous temples, in which pleasure was made a god and infamy a religious rite. What an overwhelming confutation of those degrading doctrines, which teach that man is irresistibly moulded by the climate in which he lives, is chaste and sober in the North, voluptuous in the South, a votary of Cybele or Venus in Asia, and for the very same reason a worshipper of Odin in the gloomy forests of Germany!

The countries adjoining Asia Minor and Syria were early visited by missionaries. In the second century we find Christian teachers in Armenia. The reputed letter of Jesus Christ to Abgarus, already noted by us, and the missions attributed to Bartholomew and Thaddeus, are valuable indications of the primitive tradition as to the very early propagation of the faith in those countries. It is certain that towards the commencement of the third century, Christianity had there made notable progress. The great apostle of the country was Gregory, surnamed "the Enlightener," who was born in 257. "Under the king Tiridatus," says Cedrenus, "he effected the conversion of the whole country."* Prepared for this great work at Cæsarea, where he had passed a part of his youth, and had matured in a life of solitude and asceticism, he began to preach the Gospel just when the fierce persecution under Diocletian had reached Armenia. The conversion of the King arrested the storm, and assured to the Church at least the external conquest of the country, for the protection of princes already began to exert its fatal influence, and conversions in masses took the place of the slow and sure progress, effected by the dissemination of the truth. The King, however, would not have yielded so soon, if the preaching of Gregory had not obtained extraordinary success; he did no more than recognise a victory already won. Gregory, who united great ability to ardent zeal, covered the country with Christian schools, in which

* Ἡ πᾶσα Ἀρμενεία εἰς τὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ πίστιν μετατίθεται. (Cedrenus, "Ad Annum," XIX., Const. Magni.) Sozomen ("Hist.," II. c. 8.) attributes the conversion of Tiridatus to a miracle, not mentioning Gregory.

the rising generation was trained in the religion of Christ. He went to Cæsarea, under the title of Bishop of Armenia, to obtain the ecclesiastical legalisation of his labours, another indication of the revolution which was insensibly being effected within the Church.*

Further northward,† the Gospel was at the same period penetrating to the foot of the Caucasus in Iberia, under affecting circumstances, which mark the spontaneous character of primitive missions. We borrow this narrative from the historian Socrates, who relates the facts more simply than Sozomen, though still with the addition of legendary details:—"A woman of chaste and pure life was carried captive into Iberia, by a dispensation of Divine providence. In the midst of pagans she lived a life of severe austerity. Resisting every solicitation to sin, fasting often, and constant in prayer, she was the wonder of the barbarians. It happened that an infant son of the King fell ill, and the Queen, according to the custom of the country, had him carried to some wise women to know if they could prescribe any remedy for his sickness. As the child found no relief after being taken by his nurse to these women, he was at last brought to the poor captive. In the presence of several women, she declared that she had no material aid to offer, but having taken the child in her arms, she said,—'Jesus Christ, who has healed

* Fabricius, "Lux Salutaris," p. 640; "Histoire Générale de l'Etablissement du Christianisme," translated by A. Bost, vol. I. p. 292; Lenain de Tillemont, "Mémoires," vol. V. p. 112.

† About the year 320. Although the conversion of Iberia to Christianity was not effected till some years after the period of which we are treating, we include it, as closely connected with the missions of Asia Minor.

many sick, will heal this child.' After so saying, she prayed, calling upon God to help, and the child was cured." Some days after, the Queen herself was taken ill, and she also was healed by the prayers of the slave. The King wished to acknowledge her benefits by rich presents: "I have no use for these treasures," she replied; "religion is all I need. But the greatest boon to me would be, that you should worship the God whom I know." Shortly after this, while the King was out hunting, a sudden and awful darkness fell upon him. He remembered the God of the slave, and called upon Him. He immediately placed himself under her for instruction, and became the propagator of the new faith among his people.*

It is difficult to determine with accuracy the limit reached by Christianity in the East during this period. It is certain that it gained important successes in Persia. It there came in contact with a religion which, essentially erroneous as it was, was yet far superior to the vile paganism of Asia Minor. The devotees of Zoroaster recognised, as we have already observed, the great conflict between good and evil, which lies at the basis of human history. True, they erred in too closely identifying that conflict with material elements; they knew not how to rise above the symbols which set it forth, and too often reduced it to a mere war between light and darkness; nevertheless, they worshipped in Ormuzd a divinity endowed with many traits of the moral ideal. He was not a god to be honoured by lust and bloodshed. But the "*Avesta*" did not break the fatal circle of dualism; on the contrary, it recognised

* Socrates, "H. E.," I. c. 20. Compare with Sozomen, II. c. 7.

the eternal opposition between the power of darkness and the power of light in the most vivid manner. Ahriman was represented as a gigantic serpent entangling the whole world in its coils, and infusing its poison into all beings. The religion of Zoroaster offered no sure and certain means of subduing this malignant power, but by that very fact it fostered in its votaries a sense of the need of healing and deliverance, and prepared the way for Christianity.

The incense offered by the magi to the infant Christ in His cradle, is a tribute from these old oriental religions to the religion of mankind, and a vague indication of aspirations and dim desires after God, which heaved beneath them all. Christianity was planted in Persia in the second century; this is proved by the fact, that the Manichean heresy arose in that country at the commencement of the third century. If the new religion underwent some change from its contact with Parseeism, that in its turn was sensibly modified by Christianity. The religion of Zoroaster came largely under the influence of Christian doctrine; the "Bundehesch," the sacred book which dates from the first centuries of our era, bears evident trace of this modification, and of the adoption of Christian ideas. It is not known how Christianity was introduced into Persia, probably it entered in the train of those constant wars waged between that country and the Roman empire. Captive soldiers possibly carried the Gospel with them into the enemies' land. It is certain that by the middle of the fourth century, the Christians in Persia were sufficiently numerous to be recommended

by Constantine to the King Schapur II.* This recommendation was not without avail, for in the year 343 a terrible persecution broke out, and its violence shows what must have been the triumphs of the Church before it arose. A Persian bishop sat in the Council of Nicæa.

Was Christianity carried from Persia into India, or, at least, to the frontiers of that country, which border on the far East?† This is a much controverted question, because it is well known that the ancients comprehended Ethiopia, Arabia Felix, and the adjoining countries under the name of India.‡ It is generally agreed that it was in Ethiopia that Pantænus, the illustrious founder of the school of Alexandria, preached the Gospel.§ In spite, however, of the absence of historic evidence, we are disposed to believe that some Christian missionaries did at this time reach the frontiers of India. We have already mentioned that, in the time of Constantine, a missionary returning from that country, stated that he had there found traces of primitive Christianity.‖ Arabia heard the preaching of Origen,¶ and many churches were founded in that land. Six bishops from Arabia sat in the Council of Nicæa. Abyssinia did not receive its first

* Πυθόμενος παρὰ τῶν Παρσῶν γένει πληθυειν τὰς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίας, λαούς τε μυριάνδρους ταῖς Χριστοῦ ποίμναις ἐναγελάζεσθαι. (Eusebius, "In Vita Const.," IV. 8, 9. Compare Sozomen, II. 15. See Fabricius, "Lux Salutaris," p. 634.)

† Socrates (I. 19) and Sozomen (II. 24) assert the fact.

‡ See Fabricius, "Lux Salutaris," p. 628; Mosheim, "De Rebus ante Const. Comment.," p. 207, and especially Valesius' note on Socrates, p. 13.

§ Eusebius, "H. E.," V. 10. Nicephorus, IV. 32.

‖ Philostorgius, III. 4. ¶ Eusebius, VI. c. 19.

missionaries till after the Great Council. The tradition that the Gospel was preached there in the time of the apostles is wholly unauthentic.*

Christianity consolidated during this period the conquests of the previous age in Greece and Eastern Africa. We find Greece largely represented in the Council of Nicæa.† We have few details of the missions carried on in these countries, because Christianity was there spread by a spontaneous expansion, which was rather a radiation from the centres of light already existing, than a mission properly so called. The Church of Alexandria was the metropolis of Egypt. It diffused the Christian faith through all the ancient provinces of the country, in Thebais and in Libya.‡ Thus passed away that old Egyptian idolatry, which had supposed itself immortal in its immobility. Alexandria was, during the whole of this period, the metropolis of that oriental Christianity, which was then of so prominent a type; the Eastern Church thence derived its purest splendour. So long as it was under the ascendant of the city of Clement and Origen, it was characterised by a more free and soaring genius, was less fettered by tradition and routine than its Western sister, while equalling her in zeal and fidelity, and wearing, like her, the crown of martyrdom. We shall see this type of the Eastern

* "Terram hanc nullo apostolicæ doctrinæ vomere proscissam." (Rufin, "Hist.," I. 19. See Ludolph, "Comment. ad suam Historiam Æthiopicam.")

† Bunsen, "Analect. Antenicæna," p. 271.

‡ Vansleb ("History of the Church of Alexandria," p. 29) quotes the following canon from the Arabic and Ethiopian version of the Council of Nicæa: "All the faithful who are in Egypt, Lybia, the Pentapolis and Nubia, ought to be under the government of the Bishop of Alexandria."

Church becoming more and more marked throughout the whole of the first three centuries.

(b) Conquests in Western Africa, Spain, and Italy. The Western Church.

The widest and most fertile field of missions in the West was proconsular Africa. The Church there founded rapidly rose to the first rank in numerical importance and influence.* This extensive and fruitful province had become in part the granary of Italy, which, as mistress of the world, did not take the pains to till its own prolific soil. Embracing the two Numidias, Mauritania, and Tingitania, it possessed all climates from the burning zone of the South to the snows of Atlas. The Roman administration had successfully pursued in Africa its course of assimilation. Externally, everything bore the impress of Rome; it had set its stamp on organisation, on religion, on manners; nevertheless, beneath this Roman surface, the African nationality was preserved nearly intact. Not to speak of the remote provinces which remained almost wholly alien, if not to the domination, at least to the civilisation of Italy; nor of the nomadic tribes wandering in the deserts of Numidia and at the foot of Atlas, there were to be found, even in those brilliant cities where the yoke of the foreigner seemed most firmly fixed, characteristic traits of the primitive race, and especially relics of its

* Our principal authority, apart from the Fathers, is Munter's excellent work, "Primordia Ecclesiæ Africanæ," Hafnæ, 1829. See also a noble paper, by M. Villemain, in the "Correspondant" of December 25th, 1858, entitled, "Du premièr apostolat chrétien dans la province romaine d'Afrique."

ancient beliefs. The Africans, without separating from established paganism, or braving the perils of schism, found means to remain faithful to their ancient religion, which was derived, as we know, from Asia, and was only a somewhat modified form of Phœnician naturalism. They attached themselves to that phase of Greco-Roman polytheism, which approached most nearly to their primitive worship. Instead of Dido they worshipped Jupiter; it was but a change of name. No people were more open to magic arts than these devotees of nature, who put all their confidence in her hidden powers. The writings of the time reveal on every page this tendency towards Asiatic pantheism, and this susceptibility to magic. The presence of the old African type under the Roman dominion, asserted itself very expressively in the language of the country. It was indeed Latin, the despotic tongue of the victors, imposed upon the vanquished; but how different is this African Latin from the Latin of Rome! It is fired, as it were, by the burning sun of the soil, incorrect, abrupt, subtle, but of incomparable power.

The capital of proconsular Africa, which rapidly became the centre of African Christianity, was Carthage, the famous rival of republican Rome, which, having risen in renewed youth from her ashes, almost equalled, like Alexandria, the glory of imperial Rome. Enriched by its commerce, illustrious for its lawyers, who formed a school of jurisprudence in the empire; adorned with all the splendour of a civilisation at once Asiatic and Roman, Carthage saw a vast population flow into its walls. It also aspired to distinction in letters and the fine arts; and in that age of general decay, the impetu-

ousness of the African nature was an important element of success. Schools were opened by celebrated rhetors, into which crowded a brilliant youthful race. Public readings were established as at Rome. Apuleius read his "Florides" before the assembled multitude, as Herodotus had once read his history at the Olympic games. It is true that the historian delivered his immortal pages at those grand games which formed the souls of heroes, while the African rhetor read his cold compositions on the spot where he had been preceded by jugglers and rope-dancers; but this fact only gives us a gauge of the difference between the two ages. A city like Carthage could not be a centre of civilisation without being at the same time a centre of corruption. Its excesses had made it notorious, even in a time of universal infamy. It had faithfully preserved this tradition of Asiatic paganism, and added to it all the resources of a superior civilisation. Salvian, who lived a century later, at a period when Christianity was finally victorious, gives us a graphic picture of the dissoluteness of Carthage, which must have been yet more true to the life when the city was still in the depths of pagan darkness. "Shall I speak," he says, "of this city, once the compeer of Rome in courage, and since then in splendour and rank—Carthage, the great rival of Rome, the Rome of Africa?* There I find the administrative system of the empire complete, schools of all the liberal arts, and of the philosophers, gymnasia, where languages may be learned and the mind polished. There, too, are military forces, and

* "In Africano orbe quasi Romam." (Salviani, "De Gubernatione Dei," Bk. VII. pp. 149, 150.)

their commandants, and all the array of the proconsular office. And yet, I see this famous city overflowing with vice, consumed by every form of corruption, more full of crimes than of inhabitants, abounding in riches, but yet more abounding in sin.* I see men struggling with each other for the championship of evil, some claiming the palm in rapacity, others in impurity; some stultified by wine, others by gluttony; here crowned with flowers, there steeped in perfumes; all bearing the brand of idle and corrupting luxury, almost all taken in the mortal snare of error; and if a few escape the intoxication of wine, I see them no less intoxicated with sin.† What quarter of the town is there which is not running over with vice? In what square, or in what street is there not a house of infamy?" Such was Carthage, the city devoted to the great goddess of Asia, and ever faithful to its origin. The ancient worship lingered in the country districts, without troubling to shelter itself under the externals of the State religion. There lived the old Carthaginians, speaking the language of their fathers,—an Asiatic dialect resembling in many respects the Hebrew,—and worshipping their old national gods. St. Augustine complains repeatedly of the obstacle raised by this foreign language to the propagation of the faith.‡ Yet this barbarous race was reached by the Gospel, and it gave several bishops to the Church of Africa. The Numidian and

* "Video quasi scaturientem vitiis, plenam quidem turbis, sed magis turpitudinibus." (Salviani, "De Gubernatione Dei," Bk. VII. pp. 149, 150.) † "Omnes tamen peccatis ebrios." (Ibid.)

‡ Augustine, "In Johann," Vol. XIV. p. 27. He is speaking in this passage of the old Punic tongue. (Jerome, "Præfatio ad Galatas." Arnobius, "Adv. Gent.," I. 10.)

Moorish tribes, inhabiting the foot of Mount Atlas, however, remained strangers to Christianity during this period.

The early history of the Church of proconsular Africa is as obscure as is that of most other ancient Churches. The usual attempt has been made to trace its foundation to an apostle. Popular legend, confounding Simon of Cyrene with Simon *Z*elotes, has made the latter the first missionary in Africa. There has also been an endeavour to connect the African Church, according to preconceived system, with the Church of Rome, by attributing to St. Peter the sending of apostolic legates to Carthage. This is, however, a gratuitous supposition originating with the hierarchical party. We know how diligently that party has laboured retrospectively to create for itself title-deeds of high antiquity.* Tertullian never represented the Church of Africa as of apostolic origin, although he made a complete enumeration of the Churches belonging to that category. Is it possible that he should have passed over in silence that which was both best known and best beloved by him ?† He even goes so far as to distinguish between the Church of Africa and the apostolic Churches.‡ If the Church of Carthage was not founded in the first century, we are inclined to

* Munter, "Primordia," p. 8.

† See Tertullian, "De Præscriptionibus," c. xxi., xxxii., xxxvi.; "Adv. Marcionem," IV. 5.

‡ "Eas ego ecclesias proposui quas et ipsi apostoli vel apostolici viri condiderunt. Habent igitur et illæ eamdem consuetudinis auctoritatem, tempora et antecessores opponunt magis quam posteræ istæ." (Tertullian, "De Virginibus Velandis," II.) Tertullian is speaking in this passage of the Churches of Greece and of the East.

believe that it received Christianity from the capital of the empire, to which proconsular Africa, as a Roman province, was bound by the closest ties. Communications with Alexandria were few and difficult, partly owing to the difference of language, while Latin was spoken at Carthage as at Rome. We may suppose a variety of very simple and natural circumstances, under which the Gospel might be brought to the shores of Africa. Some Christian from Italy may have come to Carthage as a trader, or a legionary, or possibly to escape from persecution. Tertullian speaks of the peculiarly friendly relations which existed between the Church of Rome and the Churches of Africa.* Cyprian calls the former the root of the latter.† St. Augustine is not less explicit: "It is manifest," he says, "that the foundation of the Churches, established throughout Italy, Gaul, Spain, Africa, Sicily, and the intermediate islands, is due entirely to the priests appointed by the venerable apostle Peter and his successors."‡ Augustine does not affirm that all these Churches were directly founded by St. Peter, since he includes his successors. The only positive fact brought out by this passage—if it is divested of any hierarchical colouring—is the foundation of the Church of Carthage by Christians from Rome. Moreover, the very same Father, in other of his writings, states that the Churches of Greece and of

* "Quod eam Africanis ecclesiis contesserant." (Tertullian, "De Præscriptionibus," c. xxxvi.)

† "Radix et matrix." (Cyprian, Epist. xlviii., "Ad Cornelium.")

‡ Manifestum esse in omnem Italiam, Gallias, Hispanias, Africam, atque Siciliam insulasque interjacentes nullum instituisse ecclesias, nisi eas quas venerabilis Petrus apostolus et ejus successores constituerint sacerdotes." (Epist. xxv., "Ad Constant.," p. 856.)

the East took part in the African missions. He calls them the root from which grew the Gospel in Africa, and he informs us that the Christians of the latter country had had friendly relations with those Churches, followed up by letters.* There is nothing to prevent our supposing that missionaries from the trading cities of Asia Minor may have landed at Carthage, and there aided in the propagation of the faith.

Such was the origin of that Church of Africa which played so important a part in the first ages of the Christian era. It had neither the speculative genius of the Church of Alexandria, nor the policy and wisdom of the Church of Rome, but it carried alike into its internal discussions and external operations for the defence of Christianity, its constitutional vehemence and ardour. This was at once its strong and its weak point. Ever prone to extremes, it was torn by schism, and made the breach irreparable by its own violence; but it had ardent zeal, indomitable spirit, irresistible eloquence. Tertullian remains after all, in spite of his errors, its most faithful representative. No Church made such rapid conquests. It won its trophies in the country districts† no less than in the towns, among the field labourers as well as in the higher classes of society. In the time of Cyprian, the heretics were numbered by thousands,‡ which presupposes a very large number of Christians. At the first Council of

* "Cæteris terris unde Evangelium ad ipsam Africam venit." (Epist. lxii., "Contra Pertinaciam Donatistorum.") Compare with the following passage, "Græcis ubi fides orta est." (Epist. clxxviii.) "Illa radice Ecclesiarum orientalium unde Evangelium in Africam venit." (Ibid.)

† "In agris." (Tertullian, "Apol.," c. xli., xlii.) ‡ Epist. lxxiii.

Carthage, in the year 225, seventy bishops from proconsular Africa and Numidia occupied seats. It is no exaggeration to reckon the number of Christians in these countries, at the beginning of the third century, at more than a hundred thousand. The Church of Carthage was like an important town in the capital of the province.

Spain probably received Christianity at once from Carthage and from Rome. The supposed missions of St. James the Greater and St. Paul are purely legendary, and ought not to detain the historian for a moment.* It is not possible to do more than verify the existence of many Churches in Spain in the third century. The labours of the missionaries who carried the Gospel there are known only by their fruits; but if their names have perished, the trace of their footprints remained deeply impressed upon that land, where so many races were to succeed each other. The Church of Spain had acquired importance at the close of the third century, for it yielded many martyrs in the persecution under Domitian. Several Councils were held in this country during the course of the fourth century.†

Christianity had been already victoriously established in Italy during the preceding period. It went on spreading from town to town, during the epoch now

* These legends are to be found in Fabricius, "Lux Salutaris," p. 374. It is impossible to ascertain how the former originated. The latter is sufficiently explained by the wish expressed by St. Paul to visit Spain.

† See Rosseeuw Saint-Hilaire, "Histoire d'Espagne," Vol. I. p. 160. Cyprian (Epist. lvii.) speaks already of the Churches of Leon, Asturias, Merida, and Sarragossa.

before us, and gathered adherents from all classes of society. We have no precise documents giving evidence of this progressive movement, except the general statements of the Fathers already cited; but it is a well-known fact, that at the commencement of the fourth century, the Church of Rome embraced an entire people. It was a power which must be recognised, and either exterminated or controlled. Between the policy of Dioclesian and that of Constantine, no middle course was possible. It was vain to pour contempt upon this new society, in all the vigour of youth and of faith, fortified and increased by conflict, strong in numbers and in zeal. The memorial inscriptions in the catacombs prove that the Christians were gathered from all classes of society. Side by side with the grave of the consulary, we find the tablet bearing the name of a slave or humble artisan; the remains of the Roman matron rest beside those of the humblest of her sex. By the aid of these names we are enabled to appreciate the progress made by Christian missions among all ranks. The Church of Rome, during the first three centuries, strove rather to increase its own numerical importance, than to exercise a wide influence abroad. It gave no illustrious teachers to ancient Christianity; it pronounced no great decisions in the polemics which arose. All the gravest questions of doctrine were debated elsewhere. Without deserving the reproach of a petty policy, this Church, by a sort of instinct of race, occupied itself far more with points of government and organisation than of speculation. Its central position in the capital of the empire, and its glorious memories, guaranteed to it a growing authority,

and thus its supremacy was virtually established long before it was technically recognised. We shall closely follow this great revolution when we come to study the history of ecclesiastical government during the first three centuries.

The Church founded at Lyons in Roman Gaul, which was a sort of metropolis to the whole of that country, was early bound by close ties to the Church of Rome. We shall do well, therefore, to include it in the same category; for at the period when the Gospel was preached in this part of Gaul, that country was wholly incorporated with the empire. It had accepted the Roman dominion and religion, and had received in exchange a brilliant civilisation, and all the lavish luxury with which Rome adorned its great cities. Magnificent monuments, temples gleaming with gold and marble, vast arenas opened for sanguinary sports —all these things, which were too often taken as a sufficient compensation for the loss of liberty, Spain possessed in abundance. The new religion was carried into these countries by the Christians of Asia Minor, who were probably led thither by some of those commercial transactions very frequent between southern Gaul and the East. Lyons was the principal depôt of the trade of Gaul. This city numbered many Asiatics among its inhabitants. Possibly these may have formed the first nucleus of the Christian Church which led to the mission of Pothinus and Irenæus. According to Gregory of Tours, these Christian emissaries were sent by Polycarp himself.* Their success was great, and the Church rapidly increased. We see by the names

* Gregory of Tours, "Historia Franciæ," Vol. I. p. 27.

of its members, which are mentioned in the letter written from the Church of Lyons to the Churches of Asia Minor, that the Greek and the Gallic elements were there represented as well as the Roman. There are but few names of the wealthy, such as the physician Alexander the Phrygian. Slaves like Blandina find place side by side with their masters; freed slaves, provincial subjects, and Romans by birth, all meet together.* Great zeal and immoveable steadfastness distinguished the ancient Church of Lyons, which fought bravely in the first ranks during the terrible conflict of the second century. From it sprang the Church of the Eduans and that of Vienna. Christianity appears even to have spread into Belgica and Germania, Prima and Secunda, for Irenæus speaks of the faith of the two Germanies.†

The Churches of proconsular Africa, of Spain, of Italy, and of Southern Gaul, constitute, at this period, the Western Church, so different in its general type from the Eastern. With the exception of Irenæus and Hippolytus, who represent the oriental element in Gaul and at Rome, the Western Fathers are broadly distinguished from those of the East. Accepting the same doctrinal basis, they differ altogether in their bias, bent of thought, and mode of expression. They affirm rather than demonstrate; their will is stronger than their logic; they prefer practical to speculative questions. The system of episcopal authority is gradually de-

* See the account of these names in Eusebius, "H. E." Bk. V. c. 1., and in Tillemont's "Mémoires," Vol. III. p. 38; also in "L'Histoire de la Gaule sous la domination romaine," by A. Thierry, Vol. II. p. 174. † Irenæus, "Contr. Hæres.," Vol. I. 3.

veloped with the larger amount of passion at Carthage, with the greater prudence and patience in Italy. But it is already evident that as Rome conquered Greece with all its wealth of thought, so the Western Church will gain the ascendancy over the Eastern, appropriating all its intellectual treasures. The hour for this victory is, however, as yet far distant, and in the age of liberty we are now considering—which knows nothing of an unreal unity, though insensibly drifting towards it—the essential differences between the two Churches are still broadly marked.

(c) Conquests of the Church in Western Gaul and in Germany.

Beside the countries which had been at once subdued and assimilated by Rome, there remained vast tracts of land which were indeed included within the material boundaries of the empire, but which were, so to speak, beyond its moral limits, inasmuch as they continued alien to its civilisation. Such was Britain, and such were some remote parts of western Gaul; the yoke was upon them, but they had not yet bowed under it. Beyond the limits of the Roman dominion, in the vast forests of Germany, a young race, valiant and earnest in spirit, was preparing for a great destiny. It was the dark cloud, hardly rising above the far horizon, and yet prophetic of coming and terrible storms. Already this menace of the future had been perceived by the keenly politic emperors, and they were on the alert and vigilant. A profound instinct warned them that peril was there. These barbarous people were destined to do more than sweep, with the besom of destruction, the face

of the old world; they were not only to raze, but to build. Christianity was to find in them its most congenial abode, and among them it was to create a new society, young, like itself, and eminently adapted to receive its influence. It was a memorable moment therefore, in history, when the Gospel was first carried to these barbarous nations.

Before Cæsar's conquest, Gaul* was divided into four parts: 1st. Aquitania, bounded on the east and north by Germany, on the south and west by the Pyrenees and the ocean. The Aquitanians and Ligurians who inhabited this region came from Iberia, the former driving the latter down upon Southern Gaul. 2nd. Belgica, which was comprehended between the Seine and the Garonne. The Belgæ were Cimbri; they were driven into Gaul by the frequent expulsion of their race from the lands between the Euxine and the Danube. 3rd. The settlement of the Galli or Celts, who belonged to the same race. They had been brought into Gaul by an earlier invasion, and occupied a line of country which, commencing from the mouth of the Tarn, followed first that stream and then the Rhone, the Isère, the Alps, the Rhine, the Vosges, the Loire, and finally rejoined the Garonne. 4th. The Phocæan colony, the capital of which was Marseilles, on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Gaul, after its conquest by Cæsar, was divided by Augustus into four provinces: 1st. The old Roman

* See "Les Gaulois," by Amédée Thierry, 4th edit., 1857; "La Gaule sous la domination romaine," by the same. "Histoire de France," Vol. I., by Henri Martin. "Histoire de l'Eglise de France," by Abbé Guettée, Vol. I.

province which was called Narbonensis. 2nd. Aquitania, which was enlarged, and extended from the Pyrenees to the Loire. 3rd. Belgica, which included the whole of the north; and 4th. Celtica, or Lugdunensis, occupying the whole centre of the country enclosed by the Loire, the Rhone from Lyons, the Rhine and the Marne, the Seine and the sea.

We have already spoken of the success of Christian missions in the central part of Gaul (Lugdunensis), which became a second Italy, so complete was the appropriation of Roman civilisation. We have, then, now only to trace the progress of Christianity in the west and north of Gaul. Here the old nationality was more strongly retained. The Gauls, an ardent and impulsive race, full of life and fervour, great talkers and great fighters, were passionately fond of action. Adventures and perils were their delight. Distant expeditions had an irresistible charm for them. They had founded a republic in Asia; Italy, before it brought them into subjection, had been made to feel their yoke. Their curiosity was insatiable; and Cæsar tells us how they would stop travellers to hear from them some new thing.* Fond of display, brilliant in everything, they attired themselves in gay colours, and their graphic and fervid speech was in harmony with the crimson tunic which they affected. Divided into numberless tribes, they had a thousand opportunities to gratify their warlike passion, and among them war knew neither truce nor end. The Roman administration did not succeed in subduing to its own type this strongly marked nationality, which still retained a persistent

* Cæsar, "Bella Gall.," IV. 15.

life, and boldly broke through the monotony of the imperial code. The further, however, we advance to the west and north, the more of gravity do we find in the Gallic race. In these regions the Druidical system assumed a definite form. The religion of the ancient Gauls was originally a rude and simple naturalism, like all the Eastern religions.* They brought it from the cradle of the Indo-Germanic race, of which they were one of the branches. The forces of nature were at first worshipped without symbols of any kind; then, rising one step, the polytheism of the Gauls personified them after the manner of the Vedas. Taranis was the spirit of thunder, the Indra, or the celestial Jupiter, the god of heaven. The sun was adored under the name of Bel, or Belenus. There were special divinities of the Vosges and the Alps. The god of war was called Hesus. Teutates represented the Greek Mercury, the swift messenger-god. Such was the popular polytheism, which, after the Roman conquest, became confounded with Greco-Roman paganism, and lost its original character.

But, side by side with this current of common tradition, we trace another stream both deeper and purer. That dogma of oriental mythology, which is the common basis of all the old religions, is not discarded: it is only elaborated and refined upon. It undergoes a transformation analogous to that which we have indicated in the religion of the Vedas, when the Indians, having come down from the heights of the Himalayas, reached the shores of the Ganges. The Druids are the

* See Amédée Thierry, "Histoire des Gaulois," Vol. I. pp. 475-490.

Brahmins of the West; the system developed by them has more than one feature of resemblance with the exalted pantheism of the far East. It is, however, distinguished by a less contemplative, less ascetic character. Its doctrines tend rather to the renewal than to the annihilation of being. Its religious ideas bear the impress of a warlike race, growing up under the influences of a climate favourable rather to vigorous action than to the slumberous reveries of India. Much talk has lately been made about Druidism. Men have spoken of it as a sort of anticipation of the true religion, as the rudimentary form of that more perfect faith, after which the heart of man had so long sighed, and as well adapted to renew in our day the youth of a decrepit world.* Without entering into a discussion, which would be here out of place, we will simply show what the Druidic religion was, not according to uncertain documents, in which it is impossible to distinguish between the original text and commentaries and additions derived from Christianity, but according to the incomplete but sure testimony of the historians of antiquity.†

Druidism lays down, as a first principle, the eternity

* See the article, "Druidisme," in the "Encyclopédie Nouvelle," by M. Jean Reynaud. See also the interesting pages devoted to this subject, by M. Henri Martin, in his "Histoire de France," Vol. I. pp. 48-54.

† M. Jean Reynaud and his disciples have taken as the basis of their estimate of Druidism, the old Breton songs collected and published by M. Pictet, of Geneva; but it is impossible to accept these as representing Druidism in its primitive form. We feel in every line that the breath of Christianity has been upon it. As well might we study Parseeism in the "Bundehesch," as study the ancient religion of Gaul in the "Triads." M. Henri Martin himself admits that these have undergone many alterations. (Vol. I. p. 75.)

of matter and of spirit. The universe is perpetually renewed by water and by fire. Man shares in this immortality of all beings. "Souls, according to the Druids," says Strabo, "are immortal as the world." "Their first desire," adds Cæsar, "is to establish that souls do not perish, but that after this life they pass into other bodies."* Beyond our world there opens another world, like ours, but more beautiful, in which, under a new form, the soul preserves its identity. Its existence is there carried on under conditions which differ according to the degree of merit.

The Druids held that a close link bound the survivors to the departed. The flame of the funeral pile brought tidings from the land of souls, and letters were cast into the fire, which the dead man was to read in the other world, or to transmit to souls already glorified.† The idea of solidarity was largely developed among the Gauls. The life of one man might be redeemed by that of another. Hence voluntary sacrifices were frequent. The Druids practised magic with its worst attendant superstitions. The mistletoe played an important part in their rites; growing upon the oak, the tree of peculiar sanctity, they believed it to possess exceptional virtue. They also looked for omens in the agonies of the prisoners who were sacrificed, or rather consumed by thousands in the wicker colossus into which they were thrown.

The priesthood among the Druids was of three orders. The bards or singers constituted the first; the *Ovates*,

* *'Αφθάρτους λέγουσι τὰς ψυχὰς καὶ τὸν κόσμον.* (Strabo, Bk. IV. p. 197.) "In primis hoc volunt persuadere non interire animas." (Cæsar, "Bella Gall.," IV. 14, VI. 14.)

† Diodorus of Sicily, "Historia," V. 28.

a description of Levites, charged with the sacrifices, formed the second; and the Druids, or guardians of the oaks, the third, or highest order. These, as the guardians of tradition, as prophets and instructors, formed the teaching body. "They were philosophers and theologians," says Diodorus Siculus.* "Their elevated dignity was due," says Ammianus Marcellinus, "to their elevation of mind, to their devotion to subjects the most profound and sublime."† To them is owing the development of Gallic polytheism into a system. Their teaching, which was entirely verbal, was also rhythmical, so as to be the more readily retained.

Such are the principal features of the Druidic religion. More than this can be said of it only by venturing on the ground of pure hypothesis. To admit, according to an inscription discovered in the twelfth century, on a subterranean altar beneath Notre Dame at Paris, that the Druids worshipped in Hesus one supreme god, veritably distinct from the world, and answering to the Jehovah of the Old Testament,‡ is to build up a magnificent system on an isolated and very fragile foundation-stone. Is it not also a forcing of interpretation to see, in the mistletoe creeping over the oak—the tree of Hesus—the symbol of the finite creature supported by the Universal Being, but not absorbed by Him? What might not be found in the numberless fables of ancient mythology by such a process? To discern, in the voluntary human sacrifices, a noble faith in immortality, and to liken the

* *Φιλόσοφοι καὶ θεολογοι.* (Diod. Sic., V. 31.)

† "Druidi, ingeniis celsiores, quæstionibus occultarum rerum altarumque erecti sunt." (Amm. Marcell., Bk. XV. c. 9.)

‡ Henri Martin, Vol. I. p. 57.

systematic slaughter of captives to the destruction of the nations of Canaan, is unwarrantably to extenuate the worst aspect of Druidism, without succeeding in commending it to the conscience. We cannot subscribe to the conclusion of a learned historian, when he says: "Our fathers represent, in the Celtic world, the most steadfast and clearest conception of immortality ever realised."* Without denying the grand features of Druidism, and while fully admitting its superiority to Brahminism in all that is manly and vigorous, we yet fail to see anything truly spiritual in a doctrine which terminates in metempsychosis and proclaims the eternity of matter. Druidism is no more exempt than the other religions of the old world, from the dualism which keeps them all outside the domain of the moral and the spiritual. Salvation, realised by man's transit through various successive forms of being, is still salvation, accomplished by man himself, either by strength or by merit of his own. Of the most characteristic doctrine of Christianity, there is not even a glimpse. Valerius Maximus defined Druidism with entire exactness, when he called it a new Pythagorism.† It has both the greatness and the deficiencies of the Pythagorean system; and when we strip it of all which it borrowed from Christianity during the first centuries of our era, we see it in its true character, as a combination of monstrous errors with genuine aspirations. The horrible and barbarous nature of its sanguinary rites, and that craving after an infinite expiation which prompted such a multiplication of human sacrifices,

* Henri Martin, Vol. I. p. 80.

† "Idem senserunt quod Pythagoras." (Valerius Maximus, II. 9.

forcibly testify to the consciousness of its own insufficiency. Like other idolatrous religions, it prepared the way for its Divine successor, not by anticipating the solution of the great religious problem set forth in it, but by stimulating the demands of conscience. The slight glimpses it gave of a future life are of value only as thus regarded; for, considered as a system, Druidism totters, like all dualistic pantheism, and is unsound from its very foundation.

Western and northern Gaul did not receive the Gospel until the third century. The apostolic origin of Christianity in those countries is a purely fabulous tradition. Legend has confounded Gaul with Galatia, into which province we find St. Paul sending Crescens, one of his travelling companions, a short time before his death.* Hence has arisen the tradition that the messenger of the great Apostle landed on the shores of Gaul. It is possible that as early as the second century, some vague reports of the new religion may have been carried beyond Gallia Lugdunensis, since Irenæus mentions the Celts among the nations which had heard the Gospel.† Communications had become easy by the broad highway crossing the country. Amédée Thierry says: "Gaul, under the Roman administration, presented much the same spectacle as North America fifty years ago; great cities rising on the ruins of poor villages or of rude fortifications; Roman and Greek art unfolding its treasures in places only yet half civilised; roads furnished with relays of horses, stores, and halting-places for the troops; inns for travellers crossing forests of ages' growth;

* 2 Tim. iv. 10. † Irenæus, "Contr. Hæres.," Vol. I. 3.

fleets of commerce sailing in all directions on the Rhone, the Loire, the Garonne, the Seine, and the Rhine, bringing in foreign commodities, and carrying away the products of the country." * This great current of commerce could hardly fail to bring about an intercommunication of ideas and beliefs all over the land. It was not, however, until the reign of Decius that important Churches were founded in western and northern Gaul. Seven missionaries left Rome at that period to carry the Gospel into those countries. Trophimus alone remained in the south, and settled at Arles. Gatian went to Tours, Paul to Narbonne, Saturnin to Toulouse, Stremonius to Clermont, Martial to Limoges, and Dionysius to Paris.†

So abundant are the legends, that no reliable information is to be obtained about this mission. We may conclude, however, from this very profusion of mythic story embodying the popular feeling, that the mission was attended with marked success. It is probable that each of the seven emissaries was a sort of missionary captain, accompanied by several Christians. Thus the Church at Bourges was founded by a disciple of Stremonius. Its foundation took place under very interesting circumstances, which may well have occurred also in other cities. A rich citizen of the town, named Leocadius, having forsaken paganism for the Gospel, gave his house to the missionaries, to be used for purposes of worship.‡

* Amédée Thierry, "Les Gaulois," Vol. I. p. 352.
† Gregory of Tours, "Historia Franciæ," Vol. I. c. xxx.
‡ Ibid., c. xxix.

Dionysius was the most active apostle of the Gauls. From Lutetia (Paris), where he resided, and where he suffered martyrdom, he sent missionaries into all the neighbouring districts,* and widely extended the empire of Christianity. Some of his companions carried the Gospel into the north of Gaul. History gives us no more positive information as to the first propagation of the faith in western Gaul.

The British Isles, divided from Gaul by some leagues of sea, observing the same religion, and subjected also to the Roman yoke—first nominally in the time of Cæsar, and then with terrible reality under Claudius—received Christianity at the same time. Tertullian speaks of it as planted in Britain.† "The Isles of Britain," says Chrysostom, "lying beyond our seas, in the very heart of ocean, have experienced the power of the Word, and churches and altars have been there erected."‡ So considerable an establishment of religion seemed to imply previous missions. An attempt has been made to trace these as far back as to St. Paul, according to the famous passage in Clement of Rome, which speaks of the Apostle as going to the uttermost parts of the west. But no certain conclusion can be drawn from these

* According to M. Edmond le Blanc, the crypt discovered in 1611, at Montmartre, under the chapel of a convent, and now filled up, had received the bones of the martyr. The inscriptions and emblems with which this crypt was filled, carry us back to the third century, by their similarity to the symbolism of the catacombs. ("Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule," Vol. I. pp. 273-276.)

† "Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita." (Tertullian, "Contr. Judæos," c. vii.)

‡ Καὶ γὰρ αἱ Βρετανικαὶ νῆσοι ἐν αὐτῷ οὖσαι τῷ Ὠκεανῷ. (John Chrysostom, "Oratio quod Christus Deus," Vol. I. p 7.)

vague terms. We have no positive statement as to the first introduction of Christianity into these countries. The conversion of the king Lucius, which is supposed to have favoured its progress, is not confirmed by any primitive testimony. We can only infer from the fact that Easter was long celebrated in the Churches of Great Britain according to the practice in Asia Minor, that the Gospel had been brought to the Britons by Christians from the East.*

Germany also received Christianity in the fourth century. Under the very elastic name of Germany, antiquity comprised the country lying between the Rhine on the west, the German Ocean on the north, the Danube on the south, and the Vistula on the east. The people inhabiting this region may be divided into two great sections. 1st. The Scandinavians, occupying the whole of the north. 2nd. The Franks and Germans on the shores of the Rhine, and the Goths on the lower Danube. These several nations belonged to the same type, with slight variations between the south and north, and possessed the same social organisation, and the same religion.† Tall in stature, fair-haired and blue-eyed, the German is endowed with prodigious strength. He seems a barbarian to the enervated and dissolute inhabitant of Italy or Southern Gaul. Nevertheless, this barbarian, in the heart of his deep forests, beneath a sky so sad and sullen, as

* For the early history of Christianity in England see the Venerable Bede's history. Blumhardt, in his translation, gives too much credence to local traditions, linking them skilfully together, but without at all establishing their authenticity.

† The great authority for the general characteristics of the Germans is Tacitus.

Tacitus observes, to all but its own children, has already achieved for himself some of the most important conquests of a more advanced civilisation. His family relations are established on a solid basis; woman holds a high rank in the regard of her people. She is no slave, the sport of a domestic tyrant, having no rights, no opinions, no high and noble affections; she is truly the wife and mother. She has the noble passions of patriotism; she is the companion of the warrior, the inspirer of national heroism. She may be seen sometimes rallying to the attack a disordered and flying troop, and in defeat she manifests a grief which is grand, even in its cruel excess, because it is disinterested. This respect for woman maintains the purity of manners. Adultery was an abomination among the Germans, and their severe morality formed a striking contrast with the laxity of Roman civilisation. Let us on this subject hear the witness of Salvian, who is describing the barbarians of the invasion, already considerably tainted by the general corruption of the times. "We are immoral," he says, "among a barbarous people, who are habitually chaste. I may say more, they are offended by our impurities. Adultery is not tolerated by a Goth. What hope, I ask, have we before God? We revel in licence, the Goths abhor it. We flee purity, they cherish it. Licentiousness is with them a crime, with us it is an honour. And we Romans think that we can find grace before God, while we sanction all sorts of infamy which the barbarians repudiate. I ask those who proclaim us to be better than the barbarians, to say if that which is an excep-

tion among them is not an almost universal rule with us?" *

The Germans were distinguished by their love of liberty. They aimed to secure, not only independence of any foreign yoke, but complete freedom in their own country. They did not shut themselves up within walled towns. Every man possessed his own little enclosure. If some traces are to be found, in the organisation of the tribes, of the system of caste brought from the East, that system was nevertheless used with large freedom. Men voluntarily gathered around one of their number, more rich or powerful than the rest. Royalty had among them no character of tyranny. The general assembly of the nation was sovereign; it expressed its approbation by the clashing of weapons upon the shields, and its disapproval by loud murmurs. Under this tumultuous form, it maintained the rights of the governed in relation to the governing. This assembly chose the judges of provinces, and the chiefs who were to lead the armies to battle. All these traits of national life indicate a genius widely differing from that of the southern nations, a genius which, under the influence of Christianity, will give us the modern world. It is well said by M. Ozanam: "Among the ancient peoples of the south, in India, in Greece, and at Rome, authority is supreme; and as authority is the force which founds and maintains, these nations have covered half the world with their institutions and their monuments. But from pushing too far the claims of

* "Quæ nobis, rogo, spes ante Deum est? Impudicitatem nos diligimus, Gothi exsecrantur. Puritatem nos fugimus illi amant." (Salviani. "De Gubernatione Dei," pp. 222, 223.)

the city, from making a divinity of country, and paying to it an idolatrous homage, they went on to declare no sacrifice too great for it. Jurisconsults proclaimed the maxim, that society has no account to render of its decisions. This was the error of the great states of antiquity; they perished from their excess, as all such powers must perish. The instinct of liberty fled and found a refuge among the Germanic nations."* This instinct of liberty explains the incessant struggles of these nations against the power of Rome. The empire found itself face to face with a nationality which could only be broken by force, which would never be bent nor assimilated. Rome might conquer by the superior organisation of her armies, and the military genius of her generals; but the spirit of the Germanic nation yet remained invincible, and fresh rebellion was sure to follow. The conflict always recommenced on the doubtful frontier, which separated free Germany from the Roman provinces. This formidable warfare was carried on from the time of Augustus down through the reign of almost all the emperors, and particularly under Domitian, Trajan, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius. At length, in spite of all its resources, in spite of its legions, and its traditions of victory, the empire was compelled to succumb. Weakened within by its own corruption, and sapped by the new religion which it thought to crush, it was impossible for it long to resist the assaults of a young and valiant race, whose free spirit must be enchained, if the world was longer to be kept securely under Roman control. The

* Ozanam, "The Germans and the Franks." See also Bunsen, "Gott in der Geschichte," Second part, p 600.

apprehension of invasion manifests itself from the close of the third century. Tertullian, in his "Apologia," speaks of the Marcomanni as inveterate enemies of the empire, who, if the Christians had been willing, would have given them formidable support against Rome.* Commodian, in his "Spicilegium," expresses the same opinion about the Goths.† In the course of the third century, the invasion of the barbarians was enumerated among the periodical scourges of the empire.‡

The apprehension thus entertained was well-founded. For the first time, the material power of Rome had come into collision with a great moral power. It is important to note the principal features of the religion which had tempered men of such a mould.§ The Germanic tribes, like the Pelasgi, brought with them from the East, the brilliant and simple naturalism which is the common patrimony of the great race to which they belong. With the Germans, however, it soon underwent a very sensible transformation, and received the impress of their grave and thoughtful character. Their rough, ungenial climate, saved them from the fascination wrought by the luxuriance of nature under Asiatic skies, from the spell of that perfidious Maia, the irresistible enchantress of India, who, after raising that country to the most exalted pantheism, let it sink, by the

* Tertullian, "Apologia," c. xxxvii.

† "Spicilegium Solemnense," Vol. I. p. 53.

‡ Arnobius, "Adv. Gentes," I. 4-14.

§ See M. Krafft's very conscientious work entitled, "Die Kirchengeschichte der Germanischen Völker," Vol. I. Edit. 1., 1854. See also the analysis of the "Edda," in the "Tableau de la Littérature du nord au moyen âge en Allemagne et en Angleterre en Scandinavie et en Slavonie par Eickhoff." Paris, 1831. Ozanam, "The Germans and the Franks." Bunsen, "Gott in der Geschichte."

force of re-action, into the depths of annihilation, the absolute void, the Nirvana of Buddhism. The Germans had not that inexhaustible fertility of the Indian imagination, which, combined with rare dialectic skill, gave birth to so many ingenious fables. Nor, barbarians as they had ever been, were they under the temptation to create, like the Greeks, an æsthetic religion, the first element of which should be the worship of the beautiful in human form. They had no great poets, nor gifted artists to call up before them an ideal of beauty, either in enchanted words or in marble; the heavy clouds which darkened their sky had never opened to disclose to their charmed gaze the luminous palaces of the gods, drinking ambrosia on a new Olympus. No; those clouds hung over their horizon a perpetual mourning veil. There is an inexpressible sadness in their mythology; but this constitutes, in truth, its peculiar merit. Inferior poetically, and as the learned or graceful rendering of popular legends, it is superior as the expression of the cravings of conscience. A breath of moral life stirs and animates it. The nations which were destined best to represent Christianity in the world had need of this severe training. Christianity was to reach, in them, its most sure abiding-place—the individual conscience.

We discover, in the religion of the Germanic tribes, as in all the ancient religions, a double current; a materialistic tendency, side by side with a tendency more noble and moral. In a worship, the basis of which was, after all, the worship of nature, vulgar minds could always find means to protect and sanction their grosser instincts. They attached themselves to those elements in religion

which responded best to their bias and desires. Thus they gave prominence to the ferocious and warlike aspect of Odin and Thor, and the goddess Freya became to many, the German Venus. The Romans were especially struck with the points of resemblance between the religion of these barbarous people and their own worship. They spoke of their gods simply in this aspect. In Odin they saw their own Mercury, and in Thor their Mars.* Tacitus, who caught a glimpse of the higher side of the German national character, yet failed to discern the purer and less apparent religious thought, which lay concealed from the eyes of strangers, beneath the rude forms of the popular religion. Like Cæsar, he saw the naturalism of the Germans, embodied in the adoration of Hertha, or the earth ; but he also utterly failed to see that which lay beneath. Of the deepest and most characteristic features of the Germanic mythology, he had no conception.† Recent discoveries, due in great measure to the Brothers Grimm, have given us an insight into these hidden beliefs, which were the inspiring thought of a whole body of ancient legends, preserved in Iceland, under the name of the Eddas. It is now proved that these legends, in their most ancient form, existed prior to Christianity.

History and cosmogony are plainly blended in this mythology. The conflict between the powers by which the world was formed, points to the wars waged by the Germanic people in the far past. This occasions inextricable confusion ; but it is nevertheless easy to

* Ozanam, " The Germans and the Franks," Vol. I. pp. 42-55.

† Cæsar, " De Bella Gall.," I. 50. Tacitus, " Germania," VIII., and " Historia," IV. p. 61.

discern the characteristic features of the Germanic religion. We cannot go over its fables in detail; we shall simply direct attention to the main points. According to the Edda, an invisible intelligence presided over the formation of the world, and directed it. The world hung upon the empty void, before any creature was called into being. A fountain gushed from the North Pole, and froze into an enormous mass of ice. This ice, softened by the burning rays, darted from the South Pole, formed the huge body of the great Ymir, the image of Chaos, from which are born the giant of the hoar-frost and the giant of the flames. These vast creations symbolise the unchained and destructive elements, which come forth from the bosom of Chaos, and wage desperate warfare till order and harmony are restored. The supreme intelligence causes the cow Audumbla to arise, which, by licking the ice from which it derives its nourishment, models in some manner all the parts of a gigantic body; the hair, the head, the members are thus formed. This new giant is called Bur. He has a son named Bor, who is the father of Odin, Vil, and Loder, the triple personification of life, light, and heat. These three brothers slay Ymir, and, with the fragments of his body, compose the various parts of the universe.

Nine spheres are thus formed: those of light, of fire, of the Ases or gods, of the Vanes or gnomes, of men, of giants, of dwarfs, of darkness, and lastly of ice, in which dwell the infernal monsters. The universe thus formed has for its emblem the tree Ydrahill, which casts its roots into the deep and frozen abyss, while its shining top is crowned with stars. Man was formed by the Ases or

gods. His enemies are the dwarfs and giants which symbolise the blind material forces of Nature. The principal god is Odin, the great warrior. His sons are many; we mention only Thor, the personification of fierce valour, and Baldur, the god of peace. Odin is the father of many other divinities, which are only impersonations of various natural or moral powers. There is continual war between the giants and the dwarfs.

In these incongruous fables, we discern one grand idea—faith in an invisible spirit, the supreme ruling principle of the world. If dualism is not vanquished, it is yet undeniable that an important part is assigned in creation to the invisible spirit. He it is who calls forth the power of organisation, and gives form to the beings which emerge from a shapeless chaos. Again, the distinction between purely natural powers and powers of a moral nature, is sharply drawn. The Ases or gods are clearly distinguished from the giants and the dwarfs, their eternal enemies; man is privileged to have the former as his defenders, the latter as his adversaries.

The peculiar originality and beauty of the Germanic mythology does not lie, however, in this cosmogony, singular as it is, like all popular legend, as to the origin of the world. That by which this mythology is distinguished from every other, is the deep consciousness it reveals of the Fall, and the universality which it assigns to it. Not men alone have fallen, but the gods also. The Germans include their very divinities in the great shipwreck of the Fall, and thus boldly avow the insufficiency of their polytheism. After a brief age of gold, the gods suffer themselves to be vanquished by the giants and the dwarfs. Locki, the perfidious giant,

binds them in his snares. He leads them into a fatal alliance; and Baldur, the pacific hero, the god of peace and love, pays with his death the price of this accursed union. Thus the moral powers are vanquished by the material. Religious feeling has lost its primitive purity. The gods worshipped in the present era are only fallen gods; religion itself bears the marks of the Fall. When did the conscience of man ever make a more significant admission, or express more forcibly its yearnings after the religion of the future? The Edda paints in striking colours that dark age of universal decay, which set in after the fall of the gods. The decease of Baldur, the pacific hero, introduced the age of death and condemnation. "After the death of Baldur, all creatures wept, and the trees and rocks wept with them. Only one daughter of the giants would not weep; and, since the redemption of Baldur from death required the tears of every creature, he remained among the dead."* What a grand conception, which leaves to the fallen creature no other part in the work of his restoration than to weep his fall! This sorrowful period was to last for three winters. Mankind has not yet passed through the first. Its whole present history is in truth but one pale winter, dark and desolate, wrapping a winding-sheet round every joy, quenching all brightness, freezing to the very heart. The braves who fought the fight for Odin are transported to the Valhalla, the intermediate abode, where they carry on their warlike sports, and prepare for the combats of the future.

There is, in truth, in reserve for the world, one final crisis. "The good tree Ydrahill will quiver in ex-

* Ozanam, "The Germans and the Franks," Vol. I. p. 36.

pectation of the threatening woes. The serpent twined around it will writhe with rage. The wolf Fenrir, the emblem of destruction, will break his chains and devour the moon; the stars will be darkened. The giants will enter on a terrible struggle with the gods. Odin will be vanquished. The earth will be plunged beneath the ocean; the stars will be quenched, and the fire will mount up to heaven. It will be the night of the gods." But this night will be followed by a morning. A brighter sun will shine upon a renovated earth. A man and a woman who have escaped the fearful destruction will give birth to a renewed humanity; a new god, the son of Baldur, will reign over the regenerated world. This new god is the object of the expectation and ardent desire of the Germanic peoples. "One day," say they in their songs, "will come a god mightier than Odin; but his name may not be said."* Thus the hymn to the unknown god rises from sombre Germany as from brilliant Athens, and the barbarians join with the Greeks in calling for him. Let us recognise in these universal accents, the same voice of the human conscience, ever asking after God. "There is a mystery," eloquently observes Ozanam, "which for six thousand years has engaged the thoughts of the world, and which is the basis of all religions. Conflict, the fall, redemption, these are the first elements of all alike; all beyond is secondary, only various readings and episodes of the same theme." "Thus humanity has ever sung its own story; it has presented to itself

* "Einst kommt ein anderer mächtiger als er. Doch ihn zu namen wag ich nicht." (Krafft, "Die Kirchengeschichte der Germanischen Völker," p. 211.)

no other spectacle than that of its ancient griefs; and I cease to wonder that it has never wearied of the same. It loves to see and touch its wounds, even if it opens them afresh; and hence it is we find a pleasure in poetry, and are not satisfied unless it is full of tears."*

Neither the Athenians nor the Romans had at all the same sorrowful sense as the Germans of man's fallen estate, of that desolate winter of humanity, that night of the gods, which is lighted only by one immortal hope, like the star which heralds the dawn. This earnest race was thus singularly prepared to receive the Gospel. But it was not till the next century that Christianity really found its way to the hearts of the Germanic peoples, and then they received it for a time in the mutilated form of Arianism. They were not passed by, however, in the great missionary movement of the third century. A bishop of the Goths sits in the Council of Nicæa;† and Sozomen, whose account is corroborated by Philostorgius, tells us that some Christian captives had spread their faith among these barbarous tribes. He says: "The Goths and the races bordering on the Danube, having already received the Christian faith, became more gentle and humane in their manners."‡ These barbarous people learned to know the Gospel through the wars perpetually waged against them by the Romans under Gallienus and his successors; for in those times, a great multitude of barbarians of all nations, having thrown themselves from Thrace upon Asia, and ravaged it,

* Ozanam, "The Germans and the Franks," Vol. I. p. 224.

† "De Gothis." Theophilus Bosphoritanus.

‡ Πάλαι μετέχοντες τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πιστεως.

and others having attacked the Romans on their own frontiers, many Christians, and even some priests, were brought among them as prisoners. These healed the sick and demoniacs by naming the name of Christ, and calling upon the Son of God; their life was exemplary, and their virtues disarmed hostility. The barbarians were filled with admiration of their holiness and their wonderful works, and they thought it must be the path of wisdom, and agreeable to God, for them to imitate those whom they saw to be better than themselves, and to embrace their religion. They asked the Christians what they ought to do, and after being instructed by them, they received holy baptism, and then took their place in the Church of Christ.* Christianity was introduced in the same manner in the provinces of the Rhine.† We find Maternus, Bishop of Trèves, sitting in the Council of Nicæa. The Church of Cologne yielded many martyrs in the persecutions of the third century. The greater number of the cities situated on the river received Christianity, as we find by the inscriptions on gravestones, the date of which is determined by their resemblance to those of the catacombs. Many are engraved in Greek characters, from which we conclude that the Gospel was brought into these regions by Christians from the East.‡

All the countries bordering on Gaul also embraced the Christian faith. It is impossible to vouch for

* Sozomen, "H. E.," Bk. II. c. 6. Philostorgius, Vol. II. c. 5.

† Ἤδη γὰρ τὰ τὲ ἀμφὲ τὸν ῥῆνον φύλα ἐχριστιάνιζον. (Sozomen, "H. E.," Bk. II. c. 6.)

‡ See Edmond Blanc, "Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule," Vol. V. pp. 327, 396, 421.

the authenticity of a single one of the innumerable details given in the "Acts of the Martyrs" of these missions. Their success, however, is beyond dispute. It appears to have been very marked in Helvetia. There we find the same race and the same religion as in Gaul. The only traces we have of the spread of the Gospel in these countries, are some fragments of funereal inscriptions, which clearly bear the impress of the new faith. The Roman armies, which constantly passed through Helvetia, included large numbers of Christians in their ranks. These left traces of their transit. The famous legend, according to which an entire legion, named the Theban Legion, was put to death in the Valais, for refusing to forsake the standard of Christ, rests probably upon some authentic facts, largely exaggerated by the popular imagination.* Geneva, in the course of the second century, received within its walls some missionaries sent from the Church at Vienna, which was founded in Southern Gaul at the same time as the Church of Lyons. We have no other positive information as to the first introduction of Christianity into Helvetia. The local traditions are all of a legendary character.†

Such were the conquests of the Church in the East and West during these two centuries. We must now follow her through the sanguinary conflicts, at the cost of which these triumphs were won.

* We shall allude again to this in the history of the persecutions.

† See "L'Histoire ecclésiastique de la Suisse sous les Romains, les Burgondes et les Allemands," by Glepke. See also "L'Histoire des origines du christianisme suisse," by Ch. Dubois, Neuchâtel, 1859.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES.

Imprisonment, Trial, and Condemnation of the Christians.

BEFORE we begin to trace rapidly the history of each of the great persecutions which burst forth in the second and third centuries, we shall do well to form a clear idea of the nature of the persecutions in general, of the various occasions which called them forth, of the track in which persecution moved, and of its results for good and evil in the Church. By grouping the scattered details which we find in the ecclesiastical historians of the time, we obtain a picture full of life and reality of the glorious endurance of the Christians. We may thus follow them into prison and into exile, stand by them before the tribunal of the Roman magistrates, and on the place of torture.

The great persecutions are generally enumerated as ten. This is, however, an arbitrary division, and we must be careful not to take it too literally. It has arisen in part from that desire to establish a methodical regularity and a certain supposed order of events, which often does violence to fact. It would be an error to assert that persecution burst forth only ten times before the Constantine era. In reality it never ceased; checked at one point, it only flamed forth

afresh at another. The most prosperous times had their martyrs. It could not be otherwise. Christianity, until the fourth century, was an unauthorised religion, a religion proscribed and illegal. The decree of Trajan, reinforced by many others, was not for a single day withdrawn. Persecution was therefore always lawful, and did not need a special permission. It might become more general and more cruel, according to the disposition of the emperors; but whether they were well-affected or otherwise towards the Christians, persecution continued to form a part of the penal legislation of the empire, and any popular tumult, or the mere caprice of the proconsul, sufficed to bring it down in all its violence upon a city or province.

In the detailed statement which we shall make of the mutual relations of the Church and the empire in the second and third centuries, we shall carefully point out the special causes of the great persecutions, of those, that is, in which the initiative was taken by the emperors themselves. For the present, it is our aim to bring out rather the characteristic features which gave individuality to the persecutions, than to study their general and political aspect. We shall see in what manner a Christian could sustain the sharpness of persecution, whether decreed by the emperor or bursting forth spontaneously. We shall endeavour to follow the proceedings taken against him, and to go through all the phases of his trial and imprisonment, even to the sanguinary close.*

* Beside the ecclesiastical writers of the time, whom we carefully quote, we refer for our authorities to the "Acta Martyrum Sincera,"

The position of a Christian in the Roman empire was always one of peril, and whatever legitimate precautions he might take, it was still difficult for him to escape his enemies. His very attitude and his scruples drew down persecution upon him; it was enough for him to abstain from some of the practices of pagan life to be at once recognised, and thus he became every hour his own betrayer. Tertullian, in his treatise on idolatry, gives a faithful representation of all the difficulties of the position of a worshipper of the true God in the midst of Roman society. He shows how the whole life of the Christian was enveloped in paganism as in a close network of mail; how he must break the iron snare at every turn if he would walk faithfully and uprightly with his God. Every step is therefore full of danger, every act implies a courageous confession, every deviation from pagan custom excites attention and stimulates aversion. The Christian is obliged at the outset to abandon all branches of industry which have any connection with idolatry, such as the making of idols, and the sale of victims for the idol sacrifices. The maintenance of the pagan worship required a large number of workmen, and no branch of labour was more profitable. How many of the converts among the lower classes of society had formerly thus made their living! No hesitation was suffered in the matter; a vocation wrong in itself must be at once forsaken; and

Ruinard Edition, Verona, 1731. We have made use of this with caution, only accepting those statements which are confirmed by the Fathers, or which, recurring in all the "Acts," acquire a sort of authenticity.

yet by suddenly abandoning it, the man exposed himself to public prosecution.* In all probability some former comrade would be found ready to denounce him.

Numberless other incidents of daily life could hardly fail to betray the Christian, even should he have been less associated, than in the case just supposed, with pagan practices previous to his conversion. What bitter enmities must he not arouse in order (to use the eloquent words of Tertullian) to avoid the breath of that plague present in the whole series of superstitious observances dedicated to the gods, or to the dead, or to kings.† Paganism has its feasts in great number, every god has his own festival. These serve as measures of time, and, in a manner, mark out the year, by their sacred anniversaries. What can the Christian do in these cherished popular solemnities? Shall he celebrate the calends of the year, or shall he, following the counsel of the stern Carthaginian, weep when the age rejoices, that he may rejoice when the age weeps?‡ If he hold himself aloof from the general gladness, his silent protest will be well understood, and will irritate popular prejudice. Often the fanatic multitude will seek to compel the Christian to take part by an act of idolatry in these public solemnities. Thus St. Symphorian was thrown into prison for refusing to worship the statue of a goddess carried in triumph

* Tertullian, "De Idolatria," IV. VII.

† "Omnem afflatum pestis in universa serie humanæ superstitionis, sive deis, sive deunctis, sive regibus mancipatæ." (Tertullian, "De Idolatria," XIII.)

‡ "Sæculo gaudente lugeamus et sæculo postea lugente gaudebimus." (Ibid.)

by a numerous procession in the country of the Eduans.*

The most simple social relations were prolific sources of conflict between the old and new faiths. The pagans were accustomed to invite each other to the sacrifices. A converted pagan frequently received such invitations. He was bound to refuse, but such a refusal was taken as a provocation. The position of a Christian slave or freed man, whose duties bound him to a pagan master, was still more difficult. Any measures were lawful against him, and many of the acts commanded by his master were forbidden by his God. Hence arose incessant perils, and there hung over the Christian the ever-impending threat of death.† The common speech was deeply tainted with paganism. The forms of taking an oath and of giving evidence all acknowledged the gods. Thus the Christian was bound to mark his separateness from those around him on all occasions, even in the course of common conversation. At the festal table he must keep a strict watch over his lips, lest by any long-wonted exclamation, such as "By Hercules," he should acknowledge the false gods. He would be constrained many a time to make the protest of a stern silence, and thus to come perpetually into collision with the inveterate prejudices of his host or former friends.‡ This obligation, under which the Christians lay, to break with pagan customs, kept up a constant dull irrita-

* "Publicæ seditionis obtentu comprehensus." ("Acta Martyrum," p. 69.)

† Tertullian, "De Idolatria," XVI. XVII.

‡ "Cæterum consuetudinis vitium est *Mehercule* dicere." (Tertullian, "De Idolatria," XX.)

tion; it was a permanent challenge repeated on every occasion.

Family relations were not without danger. The Christian woman had much to suffer from her husband, when he had not embraced her faith. How could she attend in peace to her religious duties, when she was dependent on a master who was often a vile despot? How could she go in the evening to the meeting for worship, without exciting suspicions? How could she show hospitality to strangers, brethren in the faith? how visit the martyrs in their prisons?* The Christian wife was anxious to elevate and purify conjugal union, so debased by pagan abominations. Her chastity was an offence and an insult in the eyes of her husband; and if she would escape infamy, she must be prepared for death. Justin, in his first "Apology," relates a circumstance, which occurred in his day, and which reveals all the sufferings and dangers of a mixed marriage at that time. A woman, formerly a pagan, desired, after her conversion, to renounce all the shame of her former life. She endeavoured to win over her husband to her pious design. Her frequent exhortations were vain. Feeling it an impiety to live longer in such impure associations, she determined, when she was convinced that there was no hope of any change for the better, to separate from him. In his revenge, the husband denounced her as a Christian, and had her cast into prison.†

If private life had its perils, public life was yet more

* Tertullian, "Ad uxorem," II. 4.

† Δέγων αὐτὴν χριστιανὴν εἶναι. (Justin Martyr, "First Apology," p. 42.)

dangerous. It was almost impossible for a Christian to fulfil any public duty, to be a magistrate or an officer in the army. This barrier subsisted even in the case of those who did not belong to the most rigid party—that which proscribed absolutely any contact with the world, and sought to turn the whole Church into a monastery. Believers of a broad and tolerant spirit, who would have gladly occupied the seat of the judge, or held the vine-rod of the centurion's office, found themselves embarrassed at every step by some pagan practice. There was some oath to take or deliver, or it was needful to burn incense before the image of the emperor. The customs of military service daily put the Christian conscience to the test. A warlike race like the Romans were especially anxious to conciliate the gods who presided over battle.

In war, sacrifices were continually offered with a view to secure the most powerful protection. Victory was celebrated by idolatrous rites. Nowhere was the emperor the object of more adoration than in the camps, which were nevertheless ever rife with peril and mutiny. The soldiers, who chose to bend the knee one day before the god they themselves had placed on the throne or on the altar, were no less ready the next to dash their idol to the ground, and set up another in his place. These pagan practices, the iniquitous orders issued to armies, which were frequently employed as the instruments of persecution, the immoralities ever prevalent in military life, the inevitable publicity of life in tents, which rendered the secret observance of a proscribed worship nearly an impossibility—all these causes in combination made the position of a Christian soldier

almost intolerable. He drew all eyes upon himself at a time when, for him to be known, was to be doomed. In vain might he display heroic courage in fight, and unshaken fidelity as a soldier of his country. This very fidelity, in the changing fortunes of the empire, was an element of peril. It is not surprising, then, that the Roman armies should have furnished a large contingent to the host of the martyrs. That Christian soldier, of whom Eusebius speaks, who, when summoned to offer sacrifice to the gods on being appointed centurion, nobly renounced at once honour and life, shows, by a living example, how incompatible was the profession of the faith with the military career. The bishop of the Church, to which this courageous confessor belonged, placed before him the Holy Scriptures on the one side, and a sword on the other, bidding him make his choice. He renounced the sword, though he knew well that by so doing he plunged it into his own heart.* This necessity of choosing between the Gospel and the sword, was often laid upon the Christians, and was not the least of their temptations and perils.

We have already more than once alluded to the shameless idolatry which, in these days of universal degradation, was more and more generally offered to the emperor. The Christian could not, in any way, connive at these practices. Fully ready as he was to submit to human authority, because he recognised in it

* Τὸ προσηρτημένον αὐτῷ ξίφος επιδειξας, ἅμα τε ἀντιπαρατιθησι προσαγαγὼν αὐτῷ τὴντῶν Θείων εὐαγγελίων γραφὴν, κελεύσας τῶν δυοῖν ἑλέσθαι τὸ κατὰ γνώμην. (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. VII. c. 15. Compare VIII. c. 14.)

the presence of a higher law, he could not prostrate himself before a fellow man, without renouncing his faith in the one living and true God. Humility and dignity were blended in his character; the same faith which laid him low at the feet of Christ kept him erect before man. The worshipper of the Most High could not adore, as God, that which was but dust and ashes before the Creator. "'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's,'" says Tertullian, "'and unto God the things which are God's.' Such is the teaching of Scripture. What, then, is due to Cæsar? The matter in question, when the words were first spoken, was the tribute-money. The Saviour therefore called for a piece of money, and asked what was the image graven on it? When the reply was made, The image is of Cæsar, he rejoined, 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's.' In other words, Cæsar's image is on the money, therefore the money may be fairly claimed by him; God's image is upon man, and He has an equal claim upon His own. Give therefore your money to Cæsar, and yourselves to God. If all is Cæsar's, what will remain for God?"* No decision could have been more complete or clear, but none could have struck a severer blow at the social constitution of the whole ancient world, or thrown down a broader challenge to the powers of the age. It boldly contested imperial claims, and no government is so jealous of its

* "Id est, imaginem Cæsaris Cæsari, et quæ sunt Dei Deo; id est, imaginem Dei Deo, quæ in homine est, ut Cæsari quidem pecuniam reddas, Deo temet ipsum. Alioquin, quid erit Dei, si omnia Cæsaris?" (Tertullian, "De Idolatria," p. 15.)

own unlimited authority, as one which knows it has but a short and precarious tenure of power. The Roman Cæsar demanded absolute submission of the reason, will, and life from every one of his subjects. All resistance was rebellion, and to dispute the divinity of the emperor was the worst impiety. The Christians could not but come therefore under the condemnation of this terrible statute of high treason, and torrents of Christian blood proved its unsparing vengeance. The "Acts of the Martyrdom" of St. Achates give us a vivid picture of a scene that must have been repeated many a time in the age of persecution. The proconsul, before whom the martyr was brought, addressed him thus: "Thou art bound to love our princes, as becomes a man who lives under the Roman law."* "By whom," replies the confessor, "is the emperor better loved than by the Christians? We pray perpetually that he may enjoy long life, an equitable government, peace in his time, prosperity in his armies and in the world." "It is well," replied the magistrate; "but that thou mayest better show thine obedience to the emperor, sacrifice with us to his honour." "I pray to my God for the emperor," answered the martyr; "but sacrifice in honour of him ought neither to be demanded nor presented. How can divine honours be accorded to a man?"† The sacrifice, however, was the stern requirement, and the Roman laws, to which the proconsul appealed, exacted this homage from every subject. To demand such worship from a Christian,

* "Debes amare principes nostros, homo Romanis legibus vivens." ("Acta Martyrum," p. 129.)

† "Quis enim sacra homini persolvat." ("Acta Martyrum.")

and craftily to lead him on to a formal refusal of it, was to prepare his doom.

Such was the position of a Christian at this period. In private and in public life, in his own house, or at the table of friends and acquaintances, in the camp, or in the city, he was encompassed with danger. He was a victim devoted to the fury of the populace, so soon as any trivial circumstance should arouse its slumbering ire.

There were times when this fury of the multitude knew no bounds; on the occasion, for example, of any public calamity. An ignorant and fanatic crowd at once traced their misfortune to the new religion. "What man is there," wrote the Emperor Maximus, "so mad as not to acknowledge that it is of the goodness of the gods, if the ground withhold not its fruits, if sacrilegious war break not forth suddenly, if a pestilent air slay not our frail bodies, if the sea swell not under tempestuous winds, if the earth—mother and nurse of every creature—be not upheaved from its depths in terrible convulsions? None can deny that these calamities, and worse than these, have come to pass in former times. All these things were caused by the poisonous errors and arrant folly of these men, who have been the vilest of wretches, from the first moment when this madness took root among them and began to spread, till it has covered with shame almost the whole earth." "Let the Tiber overflow its banks," we read in Tertullian, "let the Nile fail to inundate the country, let the heavens be of brass, let the sun be darkened, let famine or pestilence visit the land, and at

once the cry is raised, 'The Christians to the lions!'"*

It is not difficult to trace this popular fury to its true source. In every persecution raised against the truth, we discover the hand of a priest. The "Acts of the Martyrs" show us the pagan priests incessantly labouring by the most unworthy artifices to deceive the people. Their lying oracles are made to speak against the religion of Christ. The priest creeps into the palace of the prince or of the proconsul, and too often succeeds in making him the instrument of sacerdotal hatred and vengeance. It is easy to see from the captious questionings addressed to the accused, that those consummate rogues—the priests—have been prompting the magistrate. There is no spectacle more hideous than that of brutal force thus placed at the disposal of priestly cunning.† It is equally repulsive to all sense of fairness, to see base personal jealousies wreaking themselves through the medium of persecution. The philosopher Crescens having been vanquished in public discussion by Justin Martyr, revenged himself by a cowardly denunciation of his opponent, and thus sought to stifle in blood the voice which he could not silence by argument.‡ An unknown poet, who lived by his religious reputation, and probably found a good market for his pagan rhapsodies, was the instigator of the persecution in the

* "Si fames, si lues, statim : *Christianos ad leonem.*" (Tertullian, "Apologia," c. xi.)

† See the martyrdom of Saint Saturnin, and that of Symphorosa and his sons. ("Acta Martyrum," pp. 20-22, 110)

‡ Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. IV. c. 16.

metropolis of ancient Egypt in the time of Dionysius of Alexandria.*

Let us now transport ourselves in thought to some city of Africa, Asia Minor, or Italy, at the moment when persecution is declared. The Christians, who during the time of respite had shared in the common life of the people, and transacted their business in the Agora, now take the utmost precautions to escape malicious observation and false accusation. They are scarcely permitted to show themselves in any public place. "We are not only banished," write the Christians of Lyons, "from the baths and the Forum, but we are forbidden to appear in any public place whatever."† This is the reign of terror in the Church. No retreat, however secluded, can save the persecuted from their fierce pursuers. In this drama of persecution, the principal actor, the one who fills the whole scene, who issues imperious commands, and obtains anything at pleasure from the weakness or connivance of the magistrates, is the mob. We know to what a dangerous extent mob-rule could prevail under imperial Rome. The masses are never more powerful than when liberty is unrecognised, and the intelligent classes of a nation are deprived of their rights. A tyrannical power, when it can find no support among the higher strata of society, seeks it in the lower, and thus builds upon a foundation shifting as the sand, and as ready to be whirled hither and thither by the first breath of a new impulse. A despot only reigns by serving

* Καὶ φθάσας ὁ κακῶν τῇ πολει ταύτῃ μάντις καὶ ποιητὴς ἐκινησε καθ' ἡμῶν τὰ πλήθη τῶν ἐθνῶν. (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. VI. c. 41.)

† Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. V. c. 1.

not the true interests, but the passions of the people; tyranny is always the expression of a twofold meanness, that of the master who flatters the slave, and that of the slave who sells himself to the master. Hence the rule of the Roman emperor was at once the rule of despots and of the mob. Not content with the bread thrown to them, and the circus provided for their amusement, the populace clamoured for the torture of the Christians, and, grown weary of the old cry, "*Panem et circenses!*" it added this new and terrible cry, "*Christianus ad leonem!*" Persecution was in its commencement a popular tumult. The excited crowds often burst into the dwellings of the Christians, as in the persecution which took place in the time of Dionysius of Alexandria. That Father says: "We saw the people suddenly burst into our dwellings as if by one common impulse. Every one entered some house that was known to him, and began to spoil and destroy. All objects of value were seized; things not worth carrying away, such as wooden furniture, were burnt on the highway. The scene was that of a town taken by assault."* The same crowd follows the Christians before the tribunal, and interferes in the process of inquiry. When the Christians of Lyons were brought into the Forum by the tribune of the soldiers and the magistrates of the city, they were questioned and compelled to reply before the whole multitude, which had clamoured for their trial.† We read in the "Acts of the Martyrs:"

* Εἰθ' ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἅπαντες ὥρμησαν ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν θεοσεβῶν οἰκίας. (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. VI. c. 41.)

† Ἐπὶ παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους ἀνακριθεντες καί ὁμολογήσαντες. (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. V. c. 1.)

"Hardly had the judge taken his seat, when the hall of judgment resounded with the furious cries of the populace, raised against the innocent."* More than once, sentence was pronounced by the crowd, and only ratified by the magistrate. This was the case at the martyrdom of Polycarp. "All present lifted their voices with one accord, demanding that he should be burned alive. The execution followed almost close upon the sentence. The wood for the stake, torn in an instant from the shops and baths, was carried to the fatal spot by eager hands."† The crowd constituted itself the sole executive in the condemnation of the Christians; it carried through the whole process, from the part of the officer who arrests the accused, to that of the executioner who makes him a victim, while his voice is drowned in furious outcries. Then it might seem that its task was done, and that the deepest malice might rest satisfied. But no; once more it flung itself upon the body of the victim, and in repeated instances the very ashes were cast into the river, that every trace might be obliterated, and the work of destruction be complete.‡ But we will not anticipate the story of Christian heroism; and having thus indicated the part taken by the populace in the condemnation of the confessors, we will follow the trial through its various phases.

More than once, beyond a doubt, the sentence was summarily carried out, and the accused was tried and

* "Accenditur judex et popularis conclamatio attollitur et in innocentes simul omnium insania consurgit."

† Ταῦτα οὖν μετὰ τοσούτου τάχους ἐγένετο θᾶττον ἢ ἐλέγετο. (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. IV. c. 15.)

‡ Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. V. c. 1.

put to death on the same day. But, ordinarily, some time elapsed between the incarceration and the end. We have shown, in speaking of the captivity of St. Paul, that the severity of imprisonment might be considerably aggravated or relaxed according to the nature of the offence charged. The Christians evidently underwent the severest form of treatment as guilty of a capital crime. Pagan society, which had no compassion for weakness and misfortune, which had an ear only for the voice of influence and wealth, treated its prisoners as it treated its women, slaves, and children. It had no respect for human nature in itself, but regarded only the outward distinctions, which are the accidents, not the true dignity of life. The prisoner who had no powerful friends to avenge his wrongs or exert themselves in his behalf, was thrown into a horrible dungeon, often like the Mamertine prison, deep down in the bowels of the earth, where light and air could scarcely enter.* There he was bound in fetters,† miserably fed, often famished. The martyrs of Carthage thus describe their sufferings: "Doomed to die of hunger and thirst, we have been cast into two dungeons, where our life is consumed away. The stifling heat, caused by the numbers crowded together, is intolerable. Eight days have passed since this letter was begun. During the first five days only bread and water were doled out to us."‡ The

* "Carcer habet tenebras, triste illic exspirat." (Tertullian, "Acta Martyrum," c. ii.)

† "Habet vincula." (Ibid.)

‡ "Cum jussi sumus secundum præceptum Imperatoris fame et siti necari et reclusi sumus in duabus cellis, ita ut nos afficerent fame et siti; sed et ignis ab opere pressuræ nostræ tam intolerabilis erat, quam nemo portare possit." (Cyprian, Epist. xxii. 2.)

Church did all in its power to soften such captivity. Its attempts were more successful than might have been supposed, owing to the venality of the gaolers, whose connivance was bought with bribes. It may also be supposed that the magistrates hoped the resistance of the prisoners might be overcome by the tender urgency of their acquaintance and friends, and thus winked at their admission. Immense sums were collected to procure help for the sufferers. "As to the succour given to those who, having nobly confessed the name of the Lord, are cast into prison," writes Cyprian, "I enjoin that nothing may be neglected; for the whole sum named has been distributed among the clergy for that purpose."* Occasionally the strange sight might be seen of a love-feast celebrated beneath the dark vaults of the prison; every word of the martyrs was eagerly treasured up; the Christians were never weary of gazing on them. So great was the desire to visit them, that the most simple precautions were forgotten. Their friends besieged the door of the prison in crowds, instead of repairing to it secretly, and one by one, as prudence would have suggested.†

Captivity, so far from crushing the courage of the Christians, had usually the effect of stimulating it. The honour of suffering for the noblest of causes, the lively realisation of that Divine support promised to all who are persecuted for the truth, the universal sympathy of the Church, the contrast between the horrors of the dungeon and the enthusiastic joy filling

* Cyprian, Epist. v. 2.

† "Caute et non glomeratim nec per multitudinum." (Ibid.)

the heart of the captives, all contributed to raise the martyr Christians above themselves. They lived almost in a state of ecstasy. They had glorious visions, which made them forget their bonds and captivity; and, like the dying Stephen, they saw the dark clouds above their heads parting to reveal an open heaven, and palms and crowns of life waiting for the conquerors. The themes of their constant meditation became embodied, as it were, in dreams, which showed them all the promises of faith already realised in anticipation. Accounts of dreams and visions abound in the "Acts of the Martyrs;" they are indicative of the legitimate exaltation of soul produced among the Christians by a captivity, which was like the solemn watch of an army on the eve of the final conflict. The martyr had ever before his eyes the bloody battle which he was soon to fight, and all the perils and temptations which he would have to encounter. Perpetua sees rising before her a great ladder of gold, reaching from earth to heaven. On each side are instruments of torture, and a terrible dragon guards the first steps of the ascent. The young martyr crushes the dragon's head, and runs up all the rounds of the ladder, till she stands on the highest.* There the Good Shepherd awaits her. He is tall in stature, and full of tenderness for His sheep.† He leads them into a wonderful garden, which is like a second Eden. In another dream, the young Christian confessor fancies herself already in the midst of the amphitheatre, combating with the devil, who has taken the form of an Egyptian, and at length receiving the palm of victory. Another martyr

* "Acta Martyrum," p. 82-85. † "Grandem, oves mulgentem."

sees in his sleep a pagan coming to him, and declaring that if he does not deny the faith, he will inevitably perish. "We are ready to endure all things," replies the prisoner. "The greater the suffering the more glorious the victory."* On awaking, he feels his strength renewed by this confirmation of his earnest expectation and hope. Most frequently the prisoners are visited in their visions by their brethren who have already fought the good fight and received the crown. Perpetua sees the deacon Pomponius, but lately glorified, draw near to her prison-door to say to her: "Come, we are waiting for thee."† "He took me by the hand," she adds, "and we began to ascend together by steep and tortuous paths." Saturus, in his dream, is carried by four angels, who put on him a white robe, and bring him into the midst of all the martyrs whom he knew when on earth. "We saw," he says, "a great light, and heard a voice crying, Holy, Holy, Holy. Brought to the foot of the throne of the Lord Jesus, we were gathered to His embrace."‡ We can well imagine how visions such as these would feed the courage of the Christians. The great pastors of the Church who, like Cyprian, had suffered martyrdom, often appear to the captives in their visions.§ Thus the horrible pit is changed into the gate of heaven; and, according to the poetical expression of the "Acts of the Martyrs," the joy of the Lord breaks forth in singing from the

* "At ego confirmare votum meum volui. Vere inquam, patiemur omnes." ("Acta Martyrum," p. 198.)

† "Perpetua, te espectamus, veni." (Ibid., p. 84.)

‡ "Vidimus lucem immensam et audivimus vocem: Agios, agios, osculati sumus." (Ibid.)

§ Ibid., p. 196-203.

gloomy dungeon, and the crown blossoms on the thorns.*

Tortures are more easy to be borne than the agonised entreaties of beloved voices; but this last ordeal was often a part of the captive Christian's lot. Origen declares that martyrdom has not reached its acme of anguish, except when the tender prayers of parents have been added to the violence of the gaolers, to shake the constancy of the prisoner. "If, throughout the whole time of trial, we will give no place in our hearts to the devil, who seeks to defile us by evil thoughts of hesitation or denial; if we endure all the reproaches, all the outrages of our adversaries, and their mockery, and their slanders, and the contemptuous pity of our neighbours, who call us fools and madmen; and beyond all this, if the love of wife and of children, or attachment to that which has been our most cherished earthly treasure, fails to draw us back to life and its endearments; if, still forsaking all earthly good, we give ourselves wholly to God and to the life which comes from Him . . . . then we have filled up the measure of martyrdom." †

Family affections proved in more than one instance the most terrible of all temptations to the Christian captives. A frail woman like Perpetua had to resist at once the appeal of the tears and hoary hairs of her aged father, and the wailings of her new-born child.‡

* "Educitur de carcere lugubri gaudium cœli, de spinarum germine flos coronæ."

† Εἰ μὴ περιελκοίμεθα περισσώμενοι καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς περὶ τὰ τεκνα ἢ καὶ τούτων μητέρα φιλοστοργίας, ὅλοι γενοίμεθα τοῦ Θεοῦ, τότ' ἂν εἴποιμεν ὅτι επληρώσαμεν τὸ μέρος τῆς ὁμολογίας. (Origen, "Ad Martyr.," c. xi.)

‡ "Miserere patris." ("Acta Martyrum," p. 82.)

Irenæus, Bishop of Smyrna, at the moment of an agonising separation, had to turn away from the tears of those most dear to him. "His parents lamented over him with groans and bitter weeping; his servants and his neighbours were all filled with sorrow at his departure, and his friends implored him with many entreaties to have pity on his youth."* The magistrates who deemed it an honour to bring about the apostasy of the Christians, favoured these sorrowful meetings. They would rend without pity the tenderest ties of kindred or friendship; but when they judged that a renewal of affectionate intercourse might incline to recantation, they gave free access to the pagan father or husband, who came to plead with the captive the arguments of a blind affection. Perpetua was kept apart from her husband because he shared her faith; but her father was permitted to renew, as often as he chose, his piteous entreaties with her to draw back. The Christians of those days were called to give an eloquent living commentary on the solemn words of the Master: "If any man come unto me, and hate not father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." We can see from the greatness of their anguish that the hating, in the sense of this commandment, is compatible with a depth of love. This was undoubtedly the most bitter drop in the cup of martyrdom.

* "Parentum vero omnium luctus et fletus erat super eum, domesticorum genitus, vicinorum ululatus et lamentatio amicorum qui omnes clamantes ad eum dicebant: Teneræ adolescentiæ tuæ miserere." ("Acta Martyrum," p. 357.)

These rendings of the tenderest ties of nature, joined to the natural dread of torture, could scarcely fail to shake the resolution of unstable Christians. Weakness and indomitable strength were alike revealed when the trying day came to declare them.

We must now follow the accused before the judgment-seat. The magistrates used every means in their power to find them guilty. They even subjected slaves to torture, to wring from them depositions against their Christian masters.* As soon as the prisoners entered the Forum, they were surrounded by a fanatic mob, ever ready to drown their voices in a clamour for their death. Often they could distinguish, in the midst of the excited crowd, the sorrowful group of their relations and friends. Here and there, their eyes met kind faces, which gave a glance of encouraging approval in the midst of the stormy reprobation of the rest.† The inquiry commences. It is conducted in violation of all good faith and fairness. While every ordinary prisoner has the right of self-defence, and may even engage an advocate to plead his cause, the Christian is neither allowed to present his own apology, nor to call in the aid of a more eloquent pleader than himself.‡ The one leading question is this: Art thou a Christian? If the reply is in the affirmative, no further inquiry is needed; the crime is proved; condemnation will follow. That name

* Εις βασάνους εἵλκυσαν οἰκέτας τῶν ἡμετέρων. (Justin, "Apologia," Vol. I. p. 50.)

† "Acta Martyrum," p. 186.

‡ "Christianis solis nihil permittitur loqui quod causam purget." (Tertullian, "Apologia," c. ii.)

alone carries within it the confession of gravest crimes, and is sufficient to bring down upon him who answers to it, odious suspicions of infamy, sacrilege, and rebellion. The charge brought against the Christians is nowhere formally stated; it is a floating suspicion, as it were, finding its most forcible expression in the excited, fanatic crowd which throngs the Forum. It is an indictment brought forward anonymously, and its accusations are all the more terrible, because so indefinite that they cannot be refuted. "In the case of any other criminal," writes Tertullian, "it is not enough that he declare himself to be a homicide, sacrilegious, incestuous, an enemy of the state. Before you give sentence, O judges, you inquire rigorously into the circumstances, the quality of the deed, the place, time, manner of its commission, the witnesses and accomplices. But in the trial of the Christians all this is dispensed with."* To own to the name of Christian, was for the accused by implication to confess himself guilty of every crime. No investigation was necessary. "Public hatred asks but one thing, and that, not investigation into the crimes charged, but simply the confession of the Christian name."† The accused who will cleave to the faith, has only one reply to make, that which during three centuries never ceased to be heard in the forums of the empire, that which Cornelius put into the mouth of Polyeuctes, and which re-appears on every page of the "Acts of the Martyrs:" *I am a Christian! (Christianus sum).* Noble reply, coming

* Tertullian, "Apologia," c. ii.

† "Sed illud solum expectatur quod odio publico necessarium est, confessio nominis, non examinatio criminis." (Ibid. c. ii.)

as it did from the lips of those who knew so well the popular outcry that would inevitably follow: *Death to the Christian!* Full of sublime calmness, with that heavenly brightness upon the brow which made the face of Stephen as the face of an angel, and which is ever the martyr's aureole, the accused has but this one reply to all his questioners: *I am a Christian!* He has little to say about his worldly position, for earthly possessions are of small account in his eyes; even to the inquiry whether he is a slave, or free, he scarcely cares to answer. "What is thy condition?" said the judge to Saint Maximus. "I am a free man, but the slave of Christ."* This scorn for all the lower distinctions, so much accounted of by the world, is an unfailing characteristic of the Christians of that age, and we find the traces of it in the inscriptions on the catacombs, which, with very rare exceptions, pass over in complete silence the worldly condition of the departed.†

Having received the confession of the crime, the proconsul, without allowing the prisoner any opportunity for fair defence, and refusing positively to hear any apology for the proscribed religion, nevertheless endeavours to shake the constancy of the accused. He himself becomes his advocate, or, to speak more truly, his tempter. He sets before the prisoner the peril to which he will be exposed, the certainty of a terrible death awaiting him if he perseveres. Often he artfully

* "Cujus conditionis es?" "Ingenuus natus, servus vero Christi." ("Acta Martyrum," p. 133.)

† See on this point the very conclusive observation of M. E. Blanc, in his book, "Les inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule." Vol. I. p. 85-118, 175.

depicts the absurdity of the attitude of the accused in the eyes of his countrymen and contemporaries. The proconsul said to the martyr Epipodius: "We worship the immortal gods, who are adored by the whole world, and venerated by the most noble princes."* The wisdom of the old world had long ago given expression to the same idea in a short saying of cowardly prudence: *Væ soli!* Woe to him who is alone, had been said before Christ came. His disciples were to teach the world that there is a glorious isolation in which truth may safely stand against all the combined hosts of error; and yet more, that he who has God for him is never alone. When this same proconsul added: "We worship the gods in gladness, with feasting and games, and you fall down before a Crucified One, who repels all gladness,"† he was endeavouring to strike a vibration from the least noble chords in man's nature; but it was enough for the Christian to know that he was bearing the cross of that Crucified One, and sharing His reproach, to thrill his soul with a joy so grand and god-like that all the delights possible to a pagan life fainted and failed before it. When it was once ascertained that no suggestions such as these could shake the confessor's steadfastness, his condemnation was pronounced. About the middle of the third century capital punishment began to be deemed insufficient; the emperor gave orders that the magistrate should endeavour by torture to force a recantation. This horrible method had

* "Nos immortales deos colimus *quos universitas populorum*, quos sacratissimi principes venerantur." ("Acta Martyrum," p. 63.)

† "Nos deos colimeus lætitia, conviviis, ludis, vos vero hominem crucifixum qui lætitiam respuit." (Ibid.)

already been tried in the persecution at Lyons; from this time it became a regular part of the procedure. All the refinements of cruelty were authorised by law; and inexhaustible patience was thus pitted against remorseless barbarity. Condemnation was not, in all cases, followed by a violent death. The Christians were sometimes sent to the mines; this was the hard labour of that age. They were thus exiled to some unhealthy island. But such lenient sentences were the exception; generally, immediate death awaited the accused. The kind of death inflicted varied. Some, like St. Paul, were beheaded in prison; some were thrown to wild beasts, like Ignatius; some were burned, liked Polycarp; some Christian virgins were even sentenced to infamy before being led to execution.* Among the proconsuls some were found favourable to the Christians, and willing to employ all means to save them. Such magistrates, however, were few; the judges were most frequently the pliant instruments of the policy of the emperor, or of the passions of the people.

Large as was the number of faithful confessors, there were also some melancholy defections. Apostasy was the great trial and the great dread of the persecuted Church. Every one who had not a solid and personal faith, and had only joined the Church on some impulse of the mind or heart, without a thorough transformation of his moral nature, found himself unable to endure persecution. Many of these men, who were Christians only in name, never even crossed the threshold of the prison. They did not wait to be arrested and interrogated. "Many of our number," says Cyprian,

* "Acta Martyrum," pp. 136, 403.

"vanquished before the fight, did not even make a show of sacrificing under compulsion. They ran of their own accord to the Forum, as if they were indulging a long-cherished desire. They were to be seen entreating the magistrates to receive their recantation, though it was already almost night."* Others could endure some days of imprisonment. Some held out until the time of their trial came; but the horrible prospect of torture completed their defeat. They consented to sacrifice to the gods, or to swear by the fortune of the Emperor,—a formula of apostasy often used, because it was less open.† It was observed that those who had been brought up in dignity and wealth, and men in office, formed the majority of the apostates,‡ thus showing, as Cyprian eloquently remarks, that "they were rather possessed by their goods than possessed them."§ These were not all hypocrites. True faith has its hour of weakness, and more than one sincere believer wept repentant tears, bitter as Peter's, for the denial of which he had been guilty. Sometimes, too, the apostasy was only apparent. A wife would be dragged to the altar of the false gods by her husband, and he did the idolatrous act while he held her hands forcibly pressed within his own. The victim of such a terrible compulsion might truly say, after the unwilling sacrifice was accomplished, "It was you who did it; not I." ‖ Unhappily, too, many of the persecuted took the ini-

* "Ante aciem multi victi, ultro ad forum currere, quasi hoc olim cuperent." (Cyprian, "De lapsis," VIII.)

† Origen, "Ad Martyr.," I. 278. ‡ Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. VI. c. 41.)

§ "Possidere se credunt, qui potius possidentur" (Cyprian, "De lapsis," VIII.)

‖ "Non feci; nos fecistis." (Cyprian, Epist. XXIV.)

tiative in defection, and did not wait for any violent constraint to deny their faith. It was not, however, without deep distress of heart that they apostatised. The very crowd, which by their violence had wrung from these terrified spirits the disavowal of their faith, jested at their cowardice; and the denial often failed to fulfil its purpose, for the apostates were still objects of distrust and suspicion, and at any caprice of the fickle multitude their lives were sacrificed.* Many thus suffered the martyr's death, who had renounced the martyr's crown. Dionysius of Alexandria tells us how the apostates stood trembling during the sacrifice, as if they were themselves the victims rather than the offerers.† Cyprian has eloquently expressed the inward agony which they experienced in that accursed hour. He says: "When the apostate comes to the Capitol of his own accord, just as he is about to perform voluntarily the abominable act, does he not tremble and turn pale? Is he not shaken to the very depths of his being, while his arm falls powerless by his side? Does he not seem to have lost both speech and reason? He had renounced the devil and the world, and how can he, the servant of God, stand erect and open his mouth to deny the Lord Jesus Christ? Is not that altar, on which he is making his Lord a sacrifice, the veriest place of torture to him? Unhappy man! what need hast thou to bring a victim for sacrifice? Thou art thyself the victim before the altar, for thou hast made an offering of thy salvation, of thy

* This occurred at Lyons. (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. V. c. 1.)

† *Ωσπερ οὐ θύσοντες, ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ θύματα.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. VI. c. 4.)

hope, and it is thy faith which is consumed in those accursed flames."*

The dark despair of these apostates was terrible to witness. Some committed suicide, like Judas. Cyprian speaks of a woman, who, at the point of death, tore with her teeth the tongue which had denied the Lord Jesus.† There were various forms of apostasy. Many Christians, to save themselves from the last extremities, whether of suffering or of shame, bought for money the tolerance of the magistrates, or managed to get possession of a certificate, attesting that they had sacrificed to the gods, when they had not done so. But it was a vain subterfuge, and only added sin to sin. The *libellatici*, as those persons were called who had obtained this false certificate, were none the less numbered among the apostates.‡ The case was the same with those who had received such certificates second-hand, without having themselves appealed to the magistrates. After each persecution, the Church had a sorrowful reckoning of the dead who had fallen on the field of battle; and the lost, over whom the bitterest tears were wept, were not the martyrs, but those who in the day of peril had denied their Lord. "No words, only tears," said Cyprian, "can express the grief we feel over the wound made in the body of

* "Quid hostiam tecum, miser, quid victimam immolaturus imponis. Ipse ad aram hostia, immolasti illic salutem tuam, spem tuam, fidem tuam funestis illis ignibus concremasti." (Cyprian, "De lapsis," III.)

† Ibid., XXIV.

‡ "Sententiam nostram protulimus adversus cos, qui se ipsos infideles illicita nefarariorum libellorum professione prodiderant, quasi evasuri irretientes illos diaboli laqueos viderentur, qui non minus, quam si ad nefarias aras accessissent, hoc ipso, quod ipsum contestati fuissent, tenerentur." (Cyprian, Epist. xxx. 3.)

Christ, which is the Church, by the fatal falling away of some. Who could be so insensible, so hard-hearted, so forgetful of the love of the brethren, as to look with a dry eye on these terrible, these ruinous desolations?"* The Christians found faithless in the hour of trial, used afterwards to come back in crowds, and stand knocking at the door of the Church; and the mode of their re-admission gave rise to one of the most delicate questions of ecclesiastical discipline.

The noble courage of the true confessors of the faith stands forth in all its grandeur against the dark background of pagan cruelty and cowardly apostasy. They were heroic alike in word and deed. The mighty voice of the Holy Spirit sounded through the lips of the martyrs.† The sublime had ceased to be extraordinary in the Church. We feel, as we read the replies of the humblest Christians, so grand in their very simplicity, that human nature is raised above itself; that it is divinely exalted by the power of faith in the presence of instant peril. Especially in the first persecutions is this simple grandeur a pre-eminent characteristic. In process of time there came to be a scarcely definable theatrical element in martyrdom, and a certain admixture of human passion. Towards the commencement of the fourth century, the Christians began to feel that the triumph of their cause was secure. Their language sometimes breathes defiance; some fling the reproach of tyranny

* "Lacrymis magis quam verbis opus est ad exprimandum dolorem, quo corporis nostri plaga deflenda est." (Cyprian, "De lapsis," IV.)

† "Vox plena Spiritus Sancti de martyris ore prorupit." (Cyprian, Epist. x 4.)

in the face of their judges.* The golden age of martyrdom is in the second and third centuries. The impression produced by it upon the world and on the Church itself passes all conception. "It is certain," said Justin Martyr, "that nothing can make us deny our faith, neither the sword of the slayer, nor the cross of agony, nor the teeth of fierce beasts, nor bonds, nor fire, nor tortures of any kind. The more men multiply our sufferings, the more does the number of the faithful grow, the more are the disciples found on the side of Christ."† Instantaneous conversions took place in the very pretorium where the Christians were on their trial. When Marcellinus was condemned, the clerk of the court openly expressed his indignation, and threw down the insignia of his office.‡ Thus was daily verified the beautiful saying of Tertullian: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The Christians who survived the confessors cherished an ardent attachment to their memory. They gathered up their ashes; they recorded their words and acts.§ This natural enthusiasm, carried to excess, became the parent of more than one dangerous error, and led, in the end, to sinful idolatry. But so long as it was contained within due bounds, it stimulated faith, and sustained the spirit of heroism. We find constant traces of such an influence in the writings of the Fathers. In the "Acts of the Martyrs" it finds

* Martyrdom of Saint Romanus: "Cur jam *tyranne* non cesses." ("Acta Martyrum," pp. 214, 315.)

† "Ωσπερ ἂν τοιαῦτά τινα γινηται, τοσοὐτῳ μᾶλλον ἄλλοι πλειόνες πιστοί. (Justin, "Dial. cum Tryph," p. 337.)

‡ "Acta Martyrum," p. 267. § Ibid., p. 179.

expression in the following passage, which is full of touching simplicity and true eloquence: "O blessed martyrs, ye who have been tried by fire, like fine gold, you are crowned with the diadem and the crown which cannot fade away, because you have bruised under your feet the serpent's head."* Origen gives us the most glorious conception of these sufferings of the confessors, when he speaks of them like St. Paul, as the fulfilling of the sufferings of the Saviour, as the being crucified with Him. He says: "As we behold the martyrs everywhere under condemnation, coming forth from every Church to be brought before the tribunal, we see in each of them the Lord Himself condemned. How can we doubt it, when we know from His own words, that it is not a mere man like one of us, who is cast into prison to endure cold and hunger and thirst, but that it is He Himself who thus suffers in the sufferer. Hence, when any Christian is condemned simply as a Christian, and for no other reason, for no other crime, it is Jesus Christ who is condemned in his person. It follows that He is condemned everywhere throughout the earth where men suffer in His name."† Martyrdom, thus regarded, presents a spectacle equally sublime and pathetic. "A great assembly," says Origen, "is called to witness your combat, like the thousands who gather to watch famous athletes. You can say with Paul, 'We are a spectacle unto angels and to men.' Thus the whole

* "Acta Martyrum," p. 194.

† *Ὁσάκις οὖν χριστιανὸς δικάζεται, Χριστὸς ἔστω ὁ δικαζόμενος.* (Origen, "In Jeremiam homelia," XIV. 8; Vol. III. pp. 212, 213.)

world and all angels, those on the right hand and those on the left; all men, those on the Lord's side and those who are with His adversaries, are present at your conflict for the faith of Christ; and, according to its issue, either the angels in heaven will rejoice over you, or—God forbid—there shall be joy over you in hell."* In other words, the arena of the Church is the world, the witnesses are heaven and earth, and the strength of the Church is Jesus Christ, who is shamefully entreated in every one of His tortured followers. A cause so noble, naturally produces noble champions. The pagan world, with its glory and power, is not strong enough to fight with them and overcome them. Thus we see the Church stepping with calmness and composure into the Roman circus; for high above emperor, and generals, and senators, she sees God the Judge, and the crown of life held forth to those who are faithful unto death.

* Μέγα θέατρον συγκροτεῖται ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀγωνιζομένοις. (Origen, "Ad Martyr.," XVIII. Vol. I. p. 285.)

CHAPTER III.

THE CHURCH AND THE EMPIRE, FROM A.D. 98 TO A.D. 190.

§ I. *The Persecution under Trajan and Adrian. The Revolt of Barcochebas.*

After a transient peace enjoyed under Nerva, the Church entered upon a new period of persecution under Trajan. As in preceding reigns, the persecution was excited by popular tumults. In several cities, the people rose against the Christians, and clamoured for their death. Christianity had made notable progress in the years preceding, especially in the provinces of Asia Minor, where, amid the universal decadence of the old religions, and the eager restlessness of men's minds, a few favouring circumstances sufficed to draw great numbers into the Church. According to the testimony of Pliny, every age and condition of life furnished its contingent to the new converts. The Roman proconsul wrote in alarm: "The superstition has spread from the cities into the country like an infection carried by the wind. The temples are forsaken, and in many places the sacred ceremonies have been interrupted. Victims are no longer brought to be sacrificed to the gods."* This last charge, connected with what oc-

* "Multi omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis. Neque enim civitates tantum sed vicos etiam superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est. Prope jam desolata templa." (Pliny, Bk. X. Epist. xcvi.)

curred at Ephesus in the time of St. Paul, explains the hostility of one large section of the population against the Christians. All those who lived by the altar were sure to malign those who so gravely compromised their interests. To such motives may be in great part ascribed the popular tumults raised against the Church, which Eusebius mentions.*

The prince who at this time governed the empire, was not one of those weak and passionate tyrants, who are ever ready to flatter the passions of the multitude, and are the terrible instruments of its fury or caprice. He was neither a Nero nor a Domitian. Trajan was a man of elevated mind, an adept in the philanthropic philosophy of his time, the friend of Tacitus and Pliny. He was also an illustrious general and a consummate politician. He allowed himself to be guided by reasons of State; but these, as we have seen, tended to incline him to persecution. He had set himself the task of regenerating Roman society; he was the great protector of paganism; and Pliny, in his Panegyric, praises him for his piety. Better than any other, the philosophic proconsul could estimate the true value of this official piety. The confidant of his master, he knew the scornful scepticism which lurked beneath this seeming devotion; but it was all the more needful, from a political point of view, to encourage the revival of the ancient faiths among the people. Trajan had also another motive for being highly averse to Christianity. He had issued very severe decrees against every species of secret association, commanding his proconsuls to

* Μερικῶς καὶ κατὰ πόλεις ἐξ ἐπαναστάσεως δήμων τὸν καθ' ἡμῶν κατέχει λόγος ἀνακινηθῆναι διωγμόν. (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. III. c. 32.)

prohibit and punish them.* The assemblies of the Christians might well pass for such associations, and thus fall under the ban of the emperor.

Pliny, immediately on his arrival in Bithynia, found himself brought into contact with the Christians. They were speedily denounced to him by eager informers. He was greatly surprised at the number and character of the accused, and asked directions from his master. The letters exchanged on this subject between him and Trajan are of great importance, since they contain the first imperial rescript against Christianity. However moderate in form, this marks a momentous era. Up to this time, the pretext for the persecution of the new religion had been rather the crimes of the Christians than the doctrine itself. After Trajan's reply to Pliny, this ceases to be the case. The accusation no longer rests upon heavy crimes laid to the charge of Christianity. It is well understood between Trajan and Pliny that no such charge can be sustained. The proconsul has used all his skill in examining the accused; he has done more; according to Roman custom, he has put two slaves to the torture.† But he has been unable to find anything to lay to the charge of the new religionists, except the practice of their own worship. The sole crime of the Christians is having renounced the religion of their fathers.‡ If then they

* "Quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum quo secundum mandata tua hetærias esse vetueram." (Pliny, Bk. X. Epist. xcvi.)

† "Interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani; magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quæ ministræ dicebantur, quid esset veri, et per tormenta quærere." (Ibid.)

‡ "Nihil aliud inveni quam superstitionem pravam et immodicam." (Ibid.)

are still to be punished and proscribed, the punishment and proscription are aimed at Christianity itself. Pliny asks the emperor what course he is under such circumstances to pursue. Must he punish equally all who are implicated in this superstition without respect of age or sex? Must he seek to bring them to repentance, constrain them to apostatise (as already with notable success he had done), or must adherence to the new religion be treated as an inexpiable crime? Does the very name of Christian constitute a man a criminal, when on all other points his innocence is proved unblemished? *

Trajan's reply is very clear. He does not desire persecution for persecution's sake, for he is not cruel. He desires, then, that it be avoided as far as possible. Without laying down fixed and positive rules, the emperor wills that information against the Christians should not be encouraged, especially anonymous information; this would be a retrogression to the practices of other times.† The Christians are not to be sought out, and the greatest indulgence is to be shown to those who will recant. But to the question, whether Christianity is in itself a crime, Trajan replies without the least ambiguity. Whosoever is convicted of it, and refuses to sacrifice to the gods, is to be put to death.‡ The condemnation of the new religion is thus absolute and positive. The more the emperor is disposed to show leniency to individuals, the more evident is it

* "Nomen ipsum, si flagitiis careat."

† "Nam et pessimi exempli et non nostri seculi." (Pliny, Bk. X. Epist. lxxvii.)

‡ "Si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt." (Ibid.)

that Christianity itself is laid under the imperial ban. The Christians were the first to be misled by the mildness of the emperor's words. Comparing the moderation of Trajan with the cruelty of his predecessors, and of some of his successors, the early Church refused to allow him to be called a persecutor. Neither Tertullian nor Melito place him among the enemies of the Church. The illusion was a strange one; the letter of Trajan, by regulating and legalising persecution, made it a permanent institution. The moderation of the emperor would die with him, while his decree was a terrible weapon of offence perpetually directed against the Church, and which would soon escape the grasp of a Trajan and a Pliny.

The letter of Pliny informs us how these first persecutions were conducted. The Christians brought before the tribunal of the proconsul, whether under denunciation as Christians or for any other cause, were interrogated, and on being convicted of belonging to the sect, were at once condemned to death.* They were taken before the statues of the gods; the image of the emperor was brought. They were urged to pay homage to the gods, to burn incense in their honour, and to pour out the sacred libations while pronouncing maledictions on the name of Christ.† The inroads made by merely outward and nominal Christianity, as early as the days of St. John, explain how it was that a considerable number of those thus accused fell into apostasy. They

* "Confitentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi supplicium minatus." (Epist. Bk. X. c. 96.)

† "Cum, præunte me, deos appellarent et imagini tuæ thure ac vino supplicarunt, præterea maledicerent Christo." (Ibid.)

did not, however, calumniate the religion they abandoned; on the contrary, constrained by the power of the truth, they bore the highest testimony to its worth. Others remained immoveable, and sealed their fidelity with their blood.*

The policy of Trajan towards the Christians was adopted by his successor Adrian. There might have seemed reason to fear that the passionate attachment of this emperor to ancient customs would have led to a general persecution of the Church. There was all the more ground for such an apprehension, because in the countries where Christianity had long taken root, as in Asia Minor, the enemies of the Christians were many and bitter, and spared neither violence nor perfidy in their attacks upon them, sometimes laying anonymous charges against them, sometimes stirring up tumults, so as to force the magistrates to interfere.† The emperor in one of his journeys into Greece, sought initiation into the mysteries of Eleusis, and the Christians saw in this new sanction given to pagan superstitions new peril for themselves.‡

It was on this occasion that the first apologies of Christianity were written. Quadratus, an elder or bishop in the city of Athens, and Aristides, both sent to Adrian an argumentative defence of their faith. The result of this intervention was very happy for the Church. According to Melito of Sardis —who was almost a contemporary of Quadratus and

* "Perseverantes duci justi." (Epist. Bk. X. 96.)

† See Adrian's letter to Minutius Fondanus, Proconsul of Asia Minor: "Precibus et acclamationibus uti non permitto." ("Gieseler," I. 172. Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. IV. c. 8.)

‡ St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustribus," c. xix.

Aristides, since he lived under Marcus Aurelius—a benignant letter was written by Adrian to Fondanus, the proconsul of Asia Minor. This letter has been preserved;* and an attempt has been made to represent it as a sort of revocation of Trajan's rescript, and an implicit authorisation of Christianity, allowing it to take its place among the recognised religions of the empire. An act of such capital importance would, beyond question, have been expressly notified. Adrian simply confirmed the decree of his predecessor. If he prohibits calumny and summary conviction, he nevertheless declares that all that is contrary to law is to be punished.† Now, the profession of an unauthorised religion was unlawful in the highest degree; and it would need an unequivocal declaration to raise the new faith—the object of such violent animosities—above the interdict which for so many years had rested upon it.

While Asia Minor was the focus of persecution, the other provinces in which Christianity flourished were not exempt. Simon, the son of Cleophas, who succeeded James in the government of the Church of Jerusalem, suffered martyrdom in Palestine under Trajan. The authors of his death were some fanatical Judæo-Christians attached to the synagogue. They

* This letter was translated into Greek by Eusebius ("H. E." Bk. IV. c. 9). Rufinus has probably given the original in his translation of Eusebius.

† "Si quis igitur accusat et probat adversum leges quidquam agere memoratos homines pro merito peccatorum etiam supplicia statues." (Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," I. 73.) "If anyone gives evidence that the persons named have done anything against the laws, they are to be condemned to suffer in proportion to the gravity of their crimes."

accused him of seditious proceedings, on the ground that he was descended from the royal race of his people.* He was crucified.

The time came when the Jews were no longer obliged to use the hand of their adversaries in order to persecute the Christians. Since the year 115, they had never ceased to stir up rebellion in Greece, in Egypt, in Cyprus, and in Mesopotamia. Adrian, in his irritation, desired to annihilate the last remnants of Judaism. He forbade the Jews to practise circumcision, and commanded that an entirely new town should be built upon the ruins of Jerusalem. The emperor encountered an obstinate resistance. The Jews, under the leadership of a false Messiah named Barcochebas, struggled long, and not without success, against the Roman eagles.

The false Messiah would naturally persecute the disciples of the true. Thus the blood of the Christians flowed in torrents. When the insurrection had been subdued, the town of Ælia Capitolina, thus named in honour of the emperor, rose in the place of the Holy City.

Admission to it was prohibited to the Jews.† They were even forbidden to look from afar off at the place where once had been Jerusalem. "Adrian," says an ancient historian of the Church, "was resolved to root out this rebel race, and not leave it even a pretext for rebellion, not suffering it to hear the name of the fatherland, so fearful was he that, in its zeal and audacity,

* Ευκοφαντηθεὶς υπὸ τῶν αἱρέσεων. (Hegesippus. See Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," II. 14.)

† Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. IV. c. 6.

it would steal secretly within the walls of the city, there to fight with the Romans."* These decretals brought down the heaviest blow, not only on Judaism but on Judæo-Christianity, which had henceforward no alternative but to unite with the Church, or to perpetuate itself in the form of an heretical sect.

§ II. *The Church and the Empire under the reign of Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus.* (A.D. 138-191.)

Between the tyranny of the first Cæsars and the sanguinary and shameless folly of Commodus and Heliogabalus, a time of respite was given to the world, under the reign of the four philosophical emperors. Under two of these emperors the Church also enjoyed larger immunity from suffering, but it never passed a single day in complete security. We have seen how persecution, formally authorised by the decree of Trajan, slumbered again under Adrian, but it was a slumber lightly broken, and at any moment legal proceedings might be commenced against a proscribed religion. Antoninus Pius (136-161)—the best, perhaps, of all the Roman emperors, the most simply virtuous, the most careful of human life—maintained the same character in his conduct towards the Church. Marcus Aurelius has given us in his "Meditations" a very beautiful portraiture of his predecessor. He says: "Gentleness was united in him with stern inflexibility of judgment. He scorned the vain glory which confers false honours.

* Τὸ πὰν ἔθνος ἐξ ἐκείνου καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ Ἱεροσολυμα γῆς παμπαν ἐπιβαίνειν εἴργεται. (Aristo Pellæus, in Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. IV. c. 6. Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," I. 96.)

Zeal for the public good ever animated him. So long as he reigned, flattery was compelled to hide its head. He had no superstitious fear of the gods. While always conforming his conduct to the example of our fathers, he did not affect any display of fidelity to the ancient traditions." * Capitolinus, his historian, speaks of him thus: "Full of clemency, of a placid temperament, sober, gentle, he did all things with moderation, without boasting. Like Titus, he esteemed it better to spare the life of one man than to kill a thousand enemies." † Antoninus took no direct part in the persecutions. If he could not prevent their recurrence in some parts of his empire, it was because, in order entirely to put a stop to them, he must have revoked Trajan's decree, and thus effected a radical revolution in the whole constitution of the State; and he was not the man thus to move in advance of his age. When he was informed that in Greece the people, irritated by some public calamity, were rising and preparing to massacre the Christians, he wrote to the magistrates of the towns where these tumults had broken out, directing them to take no new measures against the Church. ‡ It is possible that these favourable letters may have been the result of the first "Apology of Justin Martyr," which was about this time presented to the emperor. That "Apology," the consideration of which in all its relations to doctrinal discussion is beyond our present

* "Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," I. 6.

† "Moribus clemens, placidus ingenio, præcipue sobrius." ("Hist. August. Anton. Pius," Jul. Capitolinus.)

‡ Ὁ δὲ πατηρ σου ταὶς πόλεσι περὶ τοῦ μηδὲν νεωτερίξειν περὶ ημῶν ἔγραψεν. (Melito, in "Apol. ad Marc. Aurel." Eusebius, "H. E., Bk. IV. c. 26.)

purpose,* is full of a manly courage and simple dignity, which must have appeared very remarkable in an age when respect and servility, firmness and rebellion, were so commonly confounded. Justin's attitude was as far as possible from that of a suppliant, tremblingly craving the favour of an arbitrary power. Deeply convinced of the goodness of his cause, he pleads it with authority, in the name of the eternal law of justice, to which violence was done in the person of the Christians, and he makes it very clear that he believes he is doing a service to his country, in thus denouncing its flagrant iniquities. This will be self-evident from the introduction to the "Apology," which is as follows:

"To the Emperor Titus-Ælius-Adrian-Antoninus-Pius, Cæsar Augustus, and to his son the eminent philosopher, and to Lucius, philosopher and friend of science, son of Lucius Cæsar by nature, and son of the emperor by adoption, to the reverend Senate, and to the whole Roman people. In the name of these unjustly hated and much-abused men, I, Justin, one of themselves, present to you this discourse and petition.† You, who are everywhere proclaimed the Pious, the guardian of justice, the friend of truth, your acts shall show whether you merit these titles.‡ My design is neither to flatter you by this letter nor to obtain any favour.‖ I simply ask you to judge us by the rules of a scrupulous and enlightened equity, and not by a

* We shall devote a special chapter to the apology of Christianity doctrinally considered.

† Ἰουστῖνος εἷς αὐτῶν. ("Apol," I. Opera, p. 53.)

‡ Εἰ δὲ καὶ ὑπάρχετε δειχθησεται. (Ibid.)

‖ Οὐ γὰρ κολακεύσοντες οὐδὲ πρὸς χάριν ὁμιλήσοντες. (Ibid.)

mere presumption, nor in the name of a superstition sanctioned by you in order to please men, nor by an unreflecting impulse, nor at the persuasion of calumny. This would be to give judgment against yourself, for we fear no harm that can be done to us by any one, if we are not found guilty of any crime. You can kill, you cannot injure us. * Our request is neither unreasonable nor audacious. What we ask is simply that a close investigation may be made into the charges brought against us, and that if they be well founded we be severely punished, as is our due. But if they are without proof, does not reason forbid you to do wrong to these calumniated men, or rather to yourselves, who would in such a case be acting not in equity but in passion? For the wise man there is but one sure way of judging, that is, to allow the accused every opportunity to prove their innocence, and not to listen on the throne to the counsels of violence or tyranny, but to those of piety and philosophy. † On these terms alone can princes and subjects know true happiness. One of old has said that if governors and governed do not allow themselves to be guided by philosophy, there is no happiness for the State. Our duty, then, is to make our deeds and our doctrines fully known, lest we should be held responsible for crimes committed against us through blindness and ignorance. Your duty to yourselves, as dictated by reason, is to investigate our cause, and to act as good judges. ‡ You will then be

* *Ὑμεῖς δ' αποκτεῖναι δύνασθε, βλάψαι δ' οὔ.* ("Apol.," I. Opera, p. 54.)

† *Ὁμοίως δ' αὖ καὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας μὴ βίᾳ, μεδε τυραννίδι, ἀλλ' ευσεβείᾳ καὶ φιλοσοφίᾳ, ἀκολουθοῦντας, τὴν ψῆφον τιθεσθαι.* (Ibid.)

‡ *Ὑμέτερον δὲ, ὡς αἰρεῖ λόγος, ἀκούοντας ἀγαθοὺς εὑρισκεσθαι κριτας.* (Ibid.)

inexcusable before God if you act not justly when you have once known the truth."

Such words might well surprise the rulers of the world; it was the first time they had heard the firm, bold utterance of the right, and the just demand of the Christian conscience.

Justin Martyr goes on to set forth with much power the iniquitousness of the summary modes of trial used in the case of the disciples of the new religion, who were condemned upon the simple declaration that they were Christians. He says: "Men deserve neither praise nor punishment for the name they bear, but for the kind of life they lead." He then deals, with remarkable force, with the accusations brought against the Christians; he repudiates them one by one, and according to the practice of ancient apologists, attacks his adversaries while he defends himself, and turns against them the sword he has snatched from their hands. The leading charges against the Christians are three. They are denounced to the emperor as atheists, rebels, and evil-doers. "True," replies Justin, "we are atheists, if to be otherwise we must needs acknowledge your gods,* which are but devils; and this glorious atheism we hold in common with Socrates, who was sacrificed, as we are, for the cause of that great truth derived from the word which he published in Greece. As for us, we have received it from the Word Himself, clothed in a visible form. Therefore are we called atheists. We are such, in reference to your gods; we are no atheists as touching the God of truth, the Father of righteousness, of wisdom, and of all virtue,

* *Ὁμολογοῦμεν τῶν τοιούτων θεῶν ἄθεοι εἶναι.* ("Apol.," I. Opera, p. 54.)

the most Holy. Him we worship. We honour Him in word and in deed, and we desire freely to impart to all the truth which we have received. We do not place wreaths of flowers on our altars, nor gather round them a crowd of victims; we do not worship the works of men's hands, placed in the temples under the names of some divinity. How can we believe that God would offer Himself in such a manner for our adoration? It is not only an absurd belief, it is an outrage upon God.* What! you give to that which perishes and cannot sustain itself, the name of Him whose glory and beauty are from everlasting to everlasting!"

With regard to the second charge, that of rebellion, Justin is not less vigorous in his defence. Not content with establishing that the kingdom founded by Jesus Christ is a purely spiritual kingdom, the progress of which need give no apprehension to the princes of this world, he clearly enunciates the wise principles of the primitive Church as to its relation to constituted authorities. After adducing the words of Christ, spoken on the payment of tribute to Cæsar, Justin adds: "We worship God alone, but with this exception, we joyfully obey you; we acknowledge you as our princes and governors, and we ask for you that to the sovereign power with which you are invested, may be added the wisdom to make a right use of it."† Justin Martyr carries his argument yet further, and shows that no doctrine is better adapted than the Christian doctrine

* Ἀλλὰ καὶ εφ ὕβρει τοῦ θεοῦ γινεσθαι ὃς ἀῤῥητον δόξαν καὶ μορφὴν ἔχων. ("Apol.," I. Opera, p. 57.)

† Ὀθεν θεον μὲν μόνον προσκυνοῦμεν ἡμῖν δὲ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα χαίροντες. (Ibid., p. 64.)

to maintain order and tranquillity in the state. Human laws are powerless as a restraint, because men always hope to elude them. But how can they escape from the God who sees all things, and knows not only what we do but even what we think? As to the crimes laid to the charge of the Christians, Justin contents himself with drawing an admirable picture of their life and worship, the pure colours of which we shall often have to borrow to assist our representation of the Christian life and practices of the ancient Church. It aims to show that this Crucified One, whom the Christians are reproached with worshipping, is the Divine Word—incarnate, sovereign wisdom, and living truth. He quotes some of His most beautiful utterances, and asks that they be tried, not by mere vulgar prejudice, but at the bar of the human conscience. Unhappily for his design, Justin in his treatise confounds philosophical discussion with the simple apology required for presentation to the emperor. He enters too minutely into details of doctrine, and into the analogy between the religion of the Incarnate Word, and the ancient religions and philosophies which contained scattered fragments of the same truth. Such dogmatic disquisitions were incongruous with a petition to Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius. The distinction established in his "Apology" between Christianity and heresy of various kinds, which he represents as a counterfeit of the Gospel wrought by Satan, is more to the point;* but here also he enters into too great detail. In spite of its defects, his "Apology" could not but produce a strong impression by its noble frankness as well as by that boldness of speech which

* "Apol.," I. Opera, p. 72 and following.

we have already remarked, and which never falters. Profoundly convinced that the struggle between the Church and the Empire is pre-eminently a struggle between the powers of heaven and hell, Justin does not hesitate to tell the emperors that they are unwittingly under the influence of evil spirits. "We are persuaded," he says, "that your conduct towards us is inspired by the impure demons who seek sacrifice and homage from those who have abjured the light of reason.* Virtuous and wise princes, such as you, would not of themselves act contrary to reason. Take heed that the demons vanquished by us do not lead you away captive. They seek to have you for their slaves and ministers." † Elsewhere Justin has the boldness to say to the supreme authority, which for so many years had decreed all the persecutions, "After all, princes who prefer an idle opinion to the truth, use a power only like that of robbers in lonely places." ‡ In other words, persecution is cowardly murder.

The close of the "Apology" is as powerful as its exordium. "If this doctrine," says Justin, in conclusion, "appears to you true and founded on reason, pay heed to it. If contrariwise, treat it as a thing of no value, but do not treat as enemies, nor condemn to death, men who have done you no wrong; for we declare to you that you will not escape the judgment of God if you persist in injustice. For ourselves, we have but one cry: The will of God be done." §

* *Πεπείσμεθα δ' ἐκ δαιμόνων φαύλων.* ("Apol.," I. Opera, p. 59.)

† *Ἀγωνίζονται γὰρ ἔχειν ὑμὰς δούλους καὶ ὑπηρέτας.* (Ibid., p. 61.)

‡ *Ὅσαν καὶ λησταὶ ἐν ἐρημία.* (Ibid., p. 59.)

§ *Οὐκ ἐκφεύξεσθε την ἐσομενην τοῦ θεοῦ κρίσιν.* ("Apol.," I. p. 99.)

If Eusebius is to be credited, Justin Martyr was not the principal apologist of this period; by his statement the Church found a very unlooked-for defender in the emperor himself. In truth, according to this historian, Antoninus Pius issued a decree very favourable to the new religion. The emperor is said not to have been satisfied with forbidding persecution (as in his letters to Greece), but to have uttered a magnificent eulogium on the Christians. Unhappily, this decree bears no impress of authenticity. Antoninus Pius cannot be regarded as the Constantine of his age. It would have required more courage for such a prince in the second century to praise a hated sect, than for an emperor in the fourth century to embrace a religion which had then become powerful. This famous decree is, then, a fictitious creation; no contemporary writer makes the slightest allusion to it.*

If the Church had passed some tranquil days under Antoninus Pius, it might be hoped that she would enjoy yet greater security when his adopted son succeeded him in the empire. What was there to fear from the virtuous Marcus Aurelius? Did he not raise with himself to the throne, the purest and most severe philosophy of the ancient world? He was the model emperor, and Gibbon does not hesitate to represent his reign as having given to the human race the highest possible sum of happiness. In the eyes of the historian, this was the Millennium of the old world. Though such an estimate is a gross exaggeration, it is neverthe-

* This decree is found in Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. IV. c. 13. It is also to be read at the close of the "Apology" of Justin Martyr. Melito, to whom Eusebius refers, mentions only the letters sent to the towns of Greece.

less indisputable that Marcus Aurelius was a great prince. "There was no difference," says Capitolinus, "between his government and that of a free city. He was in all things guided by a wise moderation, whether in warning men from evil, or inciting them to good. He knew how to make the evil good, and the good excellent.* His custom was to visit every crime with a lighter penalty than that determined by the laws, though he could show himself inexorable in the case of men guilty of grave and flagrant offences."† One cannot but wonder on what grounds Christians were classed by this so wise and virtuous emperor among those hardened offenders, in whose case he departed from his accustomed leniency. Our surprise is redoubled as we read his "Meditations," fragments often rising to sublimity, written or dictated in the rude life of camps, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Seneca, but of a logical Seneca, who carries out his principle even to the imperial purple. The slave Epictetus shows no loftier disdain for the false god which the world worships, than this crowned philosopher, who possesses in profusion all that the world can give, but whose heart sits loose to it all. He has gathered from the culture of his time all that was most elevated and pure; he breathes that spirit of humanity by which Seneca is so distinguished, which relaxes the rough Roman severity, and which, if it is not Christian charity, borrows from it, or is indirectly

* "Cum populo autem non aliter agit quam est actum sub civitate libera." ("Hist. Ang.," p. 27.)

† "Quamvis nonnunquam contra manifestos et gravium criminum reos inexorabilis permaneret." (Ibid., p. 32.)

inspired by it. What cause, then, made Marcus Aurelius a persecutor of the Church, and led him to act towards it with greater cruelty than even a Commodus or Heliogabalus?

We must first of all admit that under his reign the passions of the people, so easily excited, broke out into singular violence against the Christians. Plagues, which the best government was powerless to avert, desolated the empire again and again. Rome was visited with a terrible inundation of the Tiber. Earthquakes and epidemics succeeded each other. War was raging with unwonted fury in the East and West. Marcus Aurelius was kept in constant conflict with the Germanic tribes bordering on the empire, and at one time the threatened danger appeared to him so great, that he enrolled even the gladiators in the army. Such a measure was sure to alarm and irritate the Roman people, as interfering with one of their favourite pastimes.

Gloom and terror oppressed all hearts. There was a vague presentiment that the dominion of Rome would expire on the confines of the German forests.* Nothing is more cruel than superstition moved to fear. The excitement produced by alarm, in a people without true religion, turns to the account of fanaticism. Hence the outburst of fierce passions in many of the cities. To refuse the blood of the Christians, it would have been necessary to resist the voice of the multitude—that most imperious of all voices—and to resist it when its demand was legitimate according to the constitution of the empire; for we must never forget that the legal

* Milman, "History of Christianity," Vol. I. p. 333.

ban laid upon Christianity had not for a single day been removed. Marcus Aurelius found also too many reasons for drifting with the popular current of hatred to the Christians, for him to desire to spread the shield of his protection over a universally accursed sect. His book of "Meditations," in spite of its elevation and philosophic tranquillity, unfolds to us the secret motives of this aversion. His biography accurately epitomises them in these words: "He was of a disposition so absolutely tranquil, that his features never expressed either sadness or joy; he was a perfect votary of the stoical philosophy, which he had received from the best masters and had himself fully embraced."* Stoicism and Christianity were necessarily and inevitably antagonistic. Two doctrines, apparently somewhat akin, but in reality profoundly dissimilar, come into more violent collision than those which are in all points opposed. The stoical school, the refuge of souls who mistook pride for greatness, pretended to be the restorer of the ancient world. It encountered in its path a despised sect, which, while enwrapping itself as it seemed in the mantle of stoicism, and uttering maxims no less austere, succeeded where stoicism had failed, and robbed it of its influence. Christianity, from its very first contact with stoicism, overthrew the scaffolding so laboriously reared, and opposed the heroism of holiness to its cold and boastful virtue. Stoicism was after all but Roman pharisaism. It was, we freely admit, pharisaism free from hypocrisy, austere as that of Saul of Tarsus; but its vital breath at Rome, as at Jerusalem, was an incurable pride, and it was the natural enemy of a

* "Philosophiæ deditus stoicæ." ("Hist. Ang.," p. 29.)

religion which had its basis in humility. Pharisaism, whether seated in the chair of the doctor, or on the throne of the empire, acts infallibly the part of the persecutor.

We have no wish to detract at all from the moral greatness of Marcus Aurelius because he persecuted the Church. We recognise the loftiness of his intellect, his conscientious efforts to realise the ideal proposed to himself, and the nobleness of the sentiments he expressed in a style somewhat stiff and pretentious, as was his whole individuality. His ideal, however, had no true analogy with the Christian ideal; it was indeed, in almost every point, diametrically opposed to it. As the basis of his doctrines, Marcus Aurelius had accepted all the commonplaces of the stoical school without modification. He shared the scorn of that school for metaphysics and for all questions which had no practical bearing. He congratulated himself on having early learnt to contemn the higher philosophy. Even from this point of view, the Christian doctrine, which, to the mind of the most simple believer, is full of metaphysical mystery, could not but excite his antipathy. He accepted unreservedly the fatalistic pantheism of the school of the Stoics. "Represent to thyself," he says, "the world as an animal composed of one sole substance, and one single soul. The substance of the universe is obedient, and capable of taking any form. The reason which governs it has no principle leading it to do evil, for it has no malice; it commits no wrong and can receive no hurt. According to the laws of this reason everything goes on in the world."* These words

* Μάρκου Αντονίνου εις ἑαυτὸν Βιβλία. ("Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," VI. 1.)

are a commentary on Seneca's famous saying: *Fata nos ducunt.* This fatalistic pantheism led logically to a proud acquiescence in the decrees of destiny. The sage set before him the goal of insensibility or absolute impassibility. "Abandon thyself without resistance to the Parcæ," said Marcus Aurelius, "and let them weave into thy life whatsoever they please.* Holiness consists in loving that which comes from destiny.† Be like a promontory against which the billows break."‡ The zeal of the martyr, marching like a victor to meet death, bore no resemblance to this frigid tranquillity of the Stoic sage. "The soul," said the philosophic emperor, "ought to be ready when the moment comes, either to quit the body, to be extinguished or dissolved, or to remain a while longer with the body. But this readiness must proceed from calm reason, and not from mere obstinacy as among the Christians. It must be arrived at with reflection and dignity, so as to convince others without declamation."§ Thus the Christians, dying for their faith, were but fanatics in the eyes of Marcus Aurelius. He speaks sometimes of the gods in pious accents, but it is an illogical tribute; for at heart he does not believe in them, and doubts of their existence, and a future life is to him far from a thing of certainty. "Souls," he says, "melt away, absorbed into the generative power of the universe. We must say of all events: 'This comes of God, this is an effect of the natural sequence of things.'"‖ The law of nature, natural sequence—this is the sole divinity recognised by him; and when he seems to render homage

* "Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," IV. 34. † Ibid., XII. 1.
‡ Ibid., IV. 41. § Ibid., XI. 3. ‖ Ibid., IV. 2.

to less impersonal deities, it is a concession to the established religion, or rather, perhaps, to that inward voice, which will never be wholly stifled. His true belief is expressed in the following words: "Nature! all comes from thee, all is of thee, all returns to thee."* It would seem as if, at times, Marcus Aurelius had grasped unwittingly the conception of Christian charity. But it is only the expression of his natural benevolence, and that benevolence carries with it a large admixture of contempt. "How can we be irritated," he says, "with those who know not what is truly good or truly evil?"† The pardon of offences is with him only one form of stoical impassiveness. "A man conducts himself ill; what matters it to me? It is his affair; his actions and affections concern himself alone."‡ Marcus Aurelius nobly contradicts himself in these remarkable words: "Men are made for one another; rebuke them, then, in the wrong, or uphold them in the right."§

We know well that nothing so bitterly excited the hostility of the wise men of Judæa to Christianity, as the idea of salvation, of grace, and the offer of divine pardon. This could not fail also to prejudice the philosophic emperor against the new religion. In his view, faith in one's self was the great essential. The wise man is to seek in his own heart the remedy for evil; he is to rely entirely upon himself, to repudiate with disdain all external aid. "It is enough for us," says the author of the "Meditations," "to believe in the spirit within us,

* Ἐκ σοῦ πάντα, ἐν σοὶ πάντα, εἰς σὲ πάντα. ("Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," IV. 23.)

† Ibid., II. 3. ‡ Ibid., V. 26. § Ibid., VIII. 59.

and to honour it with sincere devotion.* The wise man lives in intimate familiarity with Him whose temple is within him. This is the divinity which makes him an athlete for the grandest of combats.† The bodily life is as a river running on; in the soul all is a vapour, a vision; life is a warfare, a traveller's sojourn; posthumous fame is oblivion. What is there, then, which can serve thee as a guide? One thing alone—philosophy; and philosophy consists in preserving the spirit within us from all ignominy.‡ In the midst of this pollution and darkness, in this current which is carrying away matter and time, what is there worthy of such great esteem? I see not. On the other hand, we must console ourselves, and await death without impatience at its delay, on this two-fold consideration: first, that nothing will happen to me which is not in harmony with the nature of all things; second, that it is not in my power to do anything against my God and the spirit that is within me."§

We can well understand how absurd, on such a system as this, must have appeared the doctrine of redemption. According to his master, Maximus, Marcus Aurelius said: "Man must present in his person the image of natural rectitude rather than of reparation."‖ It would have been impossible to define more sharply the opposition existing between Christianity and Stoicism. "Consider," said Marcus Aurelius in the same connection, "consider that at every hour of the day thou art bound to show the firmness of character becoming a man

* *Ἀρκεῖ πρὸς μόνῳ τῷ ἐνδὸν ἑαυτοῦ δαίμονι εἶναι, καὶ τοῦτον γνησίως θεραπεύειν.* ("Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," II. 13.)

† Ibid., III. 4. ‡ Ibid., IV. 23. § Ibid.

‖ *Ἀδίαστρόφου μᾶλλον ἢ διορθουμένου.* (Ibid., I. 16.)

and a Roman. Prove thyself, to the divine government which is within thee, a manly being, ripened by years, a Roman, an emperor, a soldier at his post awaiting the trumpet-call."*

Thus seeking salvation within himself, Marcus Aurelius believed he had found it. But here, again, he is happily illogical, and allows some expressions of regret to escape him, though even in their modesty there lurks a degree of pride. "O my soul," he exclaims, "will the day ever come when thou wilt be good, simple, always the same? Wilt thou ever taste the blessedness of loving and cherishing men? *Wilt thou ever be rich enough in thyself* to have no want, no regret?"† This consciousness of a relative imperfection must not be confounded with repentance. "He who sins," again says the writer of the "Meditations," "sins against himself."‡ His writings generally evidence an inward satisfaction with his own virtue. "How hast thou comported thyself unto this day?" he asks himself; "consider how complete is the history of thy life, how thou hast fulfilled thine office. Call to mind all the noble actions which have been done by thee, the many pleasures and pains thou hast despised, the honours thou hast neglected, the ingrates thou hast treated with benignity."§ The familiar prayer: "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men," rises perpetually to the lips of Marcus Aurelius, in an infinite variety of forms.‖ How must the wise man and the just, who can utter this proud

* Πασης ὥρας φρόντιζε στιβαρῶς ὡς Ρωμαῖος καὶ ἄρρην ("Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," III. 5.)

† Ibid., XI. 1.

‡ Ὁ ἁμαρτάνων ἑαυτῷ ἁμαρτάνει. (Ibid.)

§ Ibid., VI. 3.

‖ We find this prayer almost word for word. (Ibid., I. 13.)

challenge to heaven, be filled with scorn and indignation to hear all around him the broken cries of true penitents, who ask for mercy, and protest by their groans and tears against the proud self-righteousness magnifying itself by their side! If the Pharisee is all-powerful and can crush the Publican with a word, that word will be quickly spoken. Here, then, is the explanation of the persecution of the Church under the wise and virtuous Marcus Aurelius. We may finally remark that perhaps no emperor was ever more fully possessed by the idea of the pagan power of the State, or more proudly trampled on the rights of the individual conscience. He was fortified in this view by his stoical pantheism. "The end of reasonable beings," he said, "is to conform to whatever is imposed by the reason and law of the most ancient and honourable city and government."* The same legislation which is supposed to govern the universe, sacrificing the part to the whole, reappears in the State. "Just as thou thyself art a complement of the social system, so each of thy actions serves as a complement to thy social life. Every act of thine, which has no relation, either immediate or indirect, to the common end, brings confusion into thy life, and takes away from its unity. It renders thee factious, just as if thou shouldst break the unity of citizens in a nation.† That which is not useful to the swarm is not of use to the bee."‡ It is quite evident that the philosophical views of Marcus Aurelius were closely

* Τέλος λογικῶν ζώων τὸ ἕπεσθαι τῷ τῆς πόλεως καὶ πολιτείας τῆς πρεσβυτάτης. ("Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," II. 16.)

† Ὥσπερ ἐν δήμῳ ὁ τὸ καθ' αὑτοῦ μέρος δυστάμενος ἀπο τῆς τοιαύτης συμφωνείας. (Ibid., IX. 23).

‡ Ibid., VI. 54.

associated with his maxims of government, and both alike led to depreciation of the individual conscience. The quotations we have made from his works seem to us fully to explain his attitude towards the Church.*

We find among the laws of the empire, which are referred to his reign, one which, without distinctly specifying the Christians, is evidently designed for them. It shows the emperor's fixed intention to strengthen the religion of the State. . . "The divine Marcus decreed," says Modestinus, "that if any one, by any superstitious practice whatever, should alarm the susceptible minds of men, he should be banished to some island."† According to a very ancient commentary, the penalty of beheadal was substituted for that of banishment.‡ Possibly it is correct to refer, as Neander does, to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the decree mentioned in the "Acts of the Martyrdom of St. Symphorian," according to which, various tortures were to be inflicted on the Christians who refused to sacrifice to the gods, in order to shake their constancy.§ If such was the

* Neander's "Church History" (Vol. I. pp. 101-103) seems to us to idealise Marcus Aurelius too much, and not to take sufficient account of the real nature of his principles.

† "Si quis aliquid fecerit, quo leves hominum animi superstitione numinis terrerentur, divus Marcus hujusmodi homines in insulam relegari rescripsit." ("Dig.," Bk. XLVIII., xix. 1, 30.)

‡ Gieseler, "Church History," Vol. I. p. 174.

§ Comperimus ab his, qui se temporibus nostris Christianos dicunt legum præcepta violari. Hos comprehensos nisi diis nostris scrificaverunt diversis punite cruciatibus." This decree bears, in the Acts of Saint Symphorian, the name of Aurelianus, but this is an evident mistake, for the martyrdom of St. Symphorian did not take place under Aurelian. Beside, the manner in which Christians are spoken of, carries us back to an early period of their religion. It was very easy to confound the two words, Aurelius and Aure-

mind and will of the emperor, it is easy to conceive to what a height of violence the fury of a fanatical people might rise. Melito of Sardis speaks of vile informers, who, taking advantage, doubtless, of these severe decrees, entered the houses of the Christians by night or day, and gave them up to pillage.* The same Father tells us that those who denounced the Christians were promised by the magistrates possession of the goods of their victims, and that they commenced proceedings by anticipating for themselves the reward of information.†

The persecution thus aggravated prevailed alike in East and West. The Christians endeavoured anew to present their defence, and to enlighten the minds of their opponents. With the Apologies of Theophilus of Antioch and of Tatian we do not now concern ourselves, because they were essentially doctrinal treatises. Five Apologies were presented to Marcus Aurelius; that of Justin, which is erroneously supposed to have been the first, and those of Miltiades, Athenagoras, Apollinaris, and Melito of Sardis. The last of these, after pointing out the violence of the informers, simply asks if these infamous men are not abusing the name of the emperor. He cannot believe, he says, "that a decree which would not have been sanctioned for the treatment of barbarous

lianus; this decree may then be attributed to Marcus Aurelius. (See Neander, "Church History") [Vol. I. p. 149, Bohn's Ed.] Gieseler disputes this opinion on the ground of the unusual form of the decree, as if it might not easily have been inexactly reproduced in the "Acts of the Martyrs."

* Οἱ γὰρ ἀναιδεῖς συκοφάνται, τὴν ἐκ των διαταγμάτων ἔχοντες ἀφορμὴν φανερῶς ληστεύουσι. (Melito in "Apol. ad Euseb.," IV. 26.)

† Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," Vol. I. p. 128.

enemies, can have been passed against unoffending citizens."* Melito then traces back the new religion to its source, showing that though it appeared originally in a foreign land, it received the rights of citizenship at Rome under Augustus. It had been a pledge of good to the emperor so long as it prevailed in the capital of the empire. The greatness and glory of the land had increased, and thus the honour of Rome was interested in the progress of Christianity.† Persecution dated from the bad emperors—Nero and Domitian; it was not in harmony with the sound traditions of the imperial government; let there be then a return to the wise moderation of Augustus, and the example of Adrian and Antoninus Pius. Melito's argument was not wanting in skill. It justified the Christians from the dangerous charge of drawing down upon the world the scourges by which it was desolated. But it must in all candour be admitted that it exaggerated the favour once enjoyed by Christianity, when it asserted that it had been placed on the same level as other religions.‡ It was at once its glory and its peril that it ever formed an exception to the universal toleration.

We shall not enlarge upon the Apology of Athenagoras, because it is overladen with philosophical argumentation. The introduction is not wanting in ability or dignity. "The subjects of your vast empire, most noble sovereign, differ in customs and laws. No imperial

* Καινὸν τοῦτο διάταγμα ὅ μηδὲ κατὰ βαρβαρων πρέπει πολεμίων. (Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," p. 116.)

† Μάλιστα τῇ σῇ βασιλεία αἴσιων αγαθὸν, ἔκτοτε γὰρ εἰς μέγα καὶ λαμπρὸν τὸ ρωμαίων ηὐξήθη κράτος. (Ibid., p. 117).

‡ Ἦν καὶ οἱ πρόγονοί σου πρὸς ταῖς ἄλλαις θρησκείαις ἐτίμησαν. (Routh, "Reliq, Sacræ," p. 117.)

decree, no menace held forth by you, prevents them from freely following the usages of their ancestors, even though those usages be ridiculous.* The Egyptians may adore cats, crocodiles, serpents, and dogs. You and the laws pronounce the man impious who acknowledges no god, and you admit that every man ought to worship the god of his choice, in order that he may be deterred from evil by the fear of the divinity. Why then make exception in the sole case of the Christians? Why are they excluded from that universal peace, which the world enjoys under your rule?"

Athenagoras, like Justin, complains that vague report and the mere name of Christian are made sufficient ground for condemnation. He demands a *bonâ fide* inquiry, and proceeds, in default of that, to present a refutation of the three main charges of atheism, murder, and infamy, perpetually laid against the Christians.† If these crimes are proved, Athenagoras urges that they be visited with severest punishment; but let the cause at least be heard, and let justice weigh in an even balance accusers and accused.

In order to disprove the charge of atheism, Athenagoras enters upon a long philosophical discussion, which exhibits a singular blending of Christianity and Platonism. Upon the second head, his reasoning is more close and conclusive. "I know," he says, "that our justification is already established by what I have previously said. You cannot but believe that men who keep their eye steadily fixed upon God,

* Οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν νόμῳ καὶ φοβῳ δίκης, καν γελοῖα ᾖ, μὴ στέργειν τὰ πάτρια ἔργεται. (Athenagoras, in the Cologne edition of "Justin Martyr," p. 1)

† Ibid., pp. 4, 5.

as the standard of all goodness, that they may themselves become holy and unblameable, will shrink from even the very thought of crime. If we believed only in the present life, we might be suspected of serving flesh and blood, avarice and lust. But we know that by night as well as by day, we have God as the witness of our words and thoughts; we know that our God is light, and that He reads the very secrets of our hearts. We believe that after this earthly life there begins for us either a better life or a miserable existence amidst devouring flames, if we have followed the example of the wicked."* Athenagoras eloquently points out the strangeness of the part enacted by the accusers of the Church, who, covered as they themselves are with all infamy, yet dare to call in question the purity of the Christians. Is there not here an application of the old saying: "The harlot accuses the woman of modest life"?† The harlot is pagan society with all its impurities; the modest woman is the chaste spouse of Christ. As to those feasts of Thyestes, to which the celebration of the Eucharist was likened, Athenagoras appeals on the one hand to the horror of the Christians at the shedding of blood, which kept them away from the representations in the circus, and on the other hand to their belief in the resurrection of the body, which would be utterly incompatible with any such abomination. This Apology is remarkable, in that the defence of the lives of the Christians is presented from the doctrinal point of view; but we do not find in it the same firmness of language as in that of Justin,

* Athenagoras, Cologne edition of "Justin Martyr," p. 35.
† Ἡ πόρνη τὴν σώφρονα. (Ibid., p. 37.)

and it contains too many pompous eulogies on the emperors.

Of the Apology presented to Marcus Aurelius by Apollinaris, Bishop of Hieropolis, no portion remains.* That of Justin we possess entire. It abounds more than the former in philosophical digressions, which would have been more appropriate in an apologetic treatise than in a petition to the emperor. We have already mentioned the circumstance which called it forth. A question had arisen about the condemnation of a Christian woman, who had been brought by her husband before the magistrates, because she was resolved to abandon the impure life which was the rule of pagan society. Justin renews his protestations against the summary judgments passed without sufficient information against the Christians. He instances one of their most treacherous calumniators, the philosopher Crescens, whose base machinations were subsequently to bring about his own death. Against the false dealings of this man, he adduces the noble words of Socrates: "If you respect man, respect truth yet more."† It was urged against the Christians that, if they courted death, they had only to commit suicide, and they would all the sooner come to the enjoyment of their God. Justin nobly replies that a voluntary death is an impious death, and an act of rebellion against the law of God. It was for obedience to that law that the Christians were willing to fall a sacrifice. "When questioned, we reply frankly, because conscious of our innocence,

* St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustribus," c. xxvi. Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. IV. c. 27.

† Justin, "Opera," p. 42.

and because it is, in our view, the highest impiety not to be in all things faithful to the truth, in order to please God. We thus seek to disabuse you of your erroneous ideas about us."*

To the objection drawn from the sufferings of Christians by those to whom all suffering is a mark of the divine anger, Justin replied boldly that if the world was still preserved, it was for the sake of these despised men, the reproach of the empire, and yet, in truth, its safeguard; for they are like the ten righteous men whose presence would have saved Sodom. "Without them, neither wicked men nor evil angels would any longer exist. Without them, it would not be possible for you to do that which you do at the inspiration of demons; the fire of judgment would, but for them, consume all, without distinction."† The courageous Christian does not hesitate to summon his persecutors themselves to the bar of this terrible judgment. Then, having established the superiority of the doctrine of Jesus Christ over all other doctrines, he finds one final argument in the objection drawn from the sufferings of the martyrs. "See Socrates," he exclaims; "no one has believed in his words so strongly as to be willing to die for his doctrine; but for Jesus Christ, whom Socrates but dimly discerned, men die every day, and these not only wise men and philosophers, but ignorant men and artisans.‡ These are the athletes and the heroes who should be admired rather than trodden under foot." Justin con-

* Ἀσεβὲς δὲ ἡγούμενοι μὴ κατὰ παντα ἀληθεύειν. (Justin, "Opera," p. 43.)

† Ἐπεὶ εἰ μὴ τοῦτο ἦν, οὐκ ἄν οὐδὲ ταῦτα ἔπιποιεῖν. (Ibid., p. 45.)

‡ Οὐ φιλόσοφοι, οὐδὲ φιλολόγοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ χειροτέχναι. (Ibid., p. 49.)

cludes his "Apology" with a request that the emperor would make it public; he has confidence in the power of truth upon the soul of man. "Is there need to appeal to any other judge than conscience?" he exclaims. This is to the apologist the court of final appeal; at this tribunal, the decrees of Cæsar himself may be revoked. His conclusion is as follows: "All that is in our power we have done for the defence of the truth. May all men prove themselves worthy to know it! May your decision, O princes, which after all falls upon yourselves, bear the impress of piety and justice."*

This language failed to convince Marcus Aurelius, and persecution went on with unabated cruelty. Some writers of the third and fourth centuries have asserted that in the war between the Marcomanni and the Quadi, in the year 174, the Roman army, afflicted with a terrible drought, was saved by the prayers of a Christian legion, which obtained by miracle an abundant fall of rain, and that this legion, thenceforth known under the name of the *Legio fulminatrix*, secured the favour of the emperor to the proscribed religion.† This story, however, is not confirmed by any testimony worthy of credit, and is full of historical impossibilities. It is certain that the imperial armies did owe their salvation to a violent storm; but while some Christian soldiers doubtless attributed the deliverance to their prayers, it is no less certain that they failed to make the pagans share their conviction, for the same event is, on the testimony of inscriptions that cannot be questioned, ascribed by the

* Εἴη οὖν καὶ ὑμᾶς ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν κρῖναι. (Justin, "Opera," p. 52.)

† Tertullian, "Apologia," c. iv.; "Ad Scapulam," c. iv.; Eusebius, "H.E.," Bk. V. c. 3.

emperor to Jupiter and not to Jesus Christ. Nor is there any indication of a change in his policy with regard to the Christians.*

In the East, persecution spent its greatest force on the city of Smyrna. It commenced, as usual, in popular uprisings. Polycarp, whose martyrdom we have already described, was the most illustrious victim. In the West, the Church of Rome was exposed to terrible sufferings. The "Acts of the Martyrs" refer to this period the torture of St. Felicitas and her seven sons—an instance of heroism surpassing that of the mother of the Maccabees. It was especially against central Gaul that the fury of the enemies of Christianity spent itself. The letter of the Church of Lyons to that of Asia Minor gives us an incomparable picture of this persecution.† The houses of the Christians were broken into by an excited mob, who carried devastation in their track. The Christians were thrown in crowds into dungeons, and subjected to fearful tortures. Some were subdued by the excessive bodily agony, but the greater part endured with unshaken fortitude. "They

* Mosheim ("Commentaria rerum Christian. ante Constant.," p. 247-252) divests the pretended miracle of the legion of all vestige of probability, on conclusive grounds. He shows that the testimony of Tertullian ("Apology," c. v.) is vague, that the name *fulminatrix* belonged, from the time of Augustus, to the same legion (Dio Cassius, IV. 23), and that it was moreover not possible that an entire legion should at this time be composed of Christians. He proves that several medals ascribe the miracle to Jupiter, who is proclaimed as the Protector of the Romans in the Antoninus Column. He establishes, further, the continuance of persecution to the close of the reign. (See also Neander, Vol. I. pp. 116, 117 [Eng. Trans., p. 159–161, Bohn's Ed.]; and Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," Vol. I. p. 164.)

† See this letter in Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. V. c. 1, 2, 3. See also Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," Vol. I. p. 293.

know that, possessing the love of God, they have nothing to fear, and they count all suffering light when the glory of Christ is concerned."* It might seem that they had become insensible to sorrow, so convinced are they that "the sufferings of the present time are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed in them." Calm and intrepid before the bar of their judges, they confess the name of Christ with heroic courage, as often as their voice can rise above the clamour of the crowd. The Christian Sixtus gives repeated and astonishing proofs of steadfastness amid unparalleled agonies. Not content with wreaking on the bodies of the Christians themselves the refined barbarity of Roman torture, the magistrates put the slaves of Christians to the rack to obtain some evidence against them. Indignant at so iniquitous a proceeding, Vettius Epagathus, a distinguished citizen, who had hitherto kept secret his adhesion to the faith of Christ, took up the defence of his accused brethren, and at the inquiry before the proconsul acted as advocate for the Christians, well knowing that by so doing he subjected himself to the sentence of death.† When the odious and stupid charge was reiterated, that the Christians renewed the feasts of Thyestes, and sacrificed little children in the celebration of their mysteries, Attalus, one of the accused, whose body had been already lacerated with tortures, flung in the face of his judges this terrible rejoinder: "It is you who devour human flesh."‡ Both

* Μηδὲν φοβερὸν πατρὸς ἀγάπῃ, μηδὲ' ἀλγεινόν ὅπου Χριστοῦ δόξα. (Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," p. 303.)

† Ibid., p. 298.

‡ Ἰδοὺ τοῦτο ἐστιν ἀνθρώπους ἐσθίειν. (Ibid., p. 315.)

old age and tender youth showed indomitable courage. The Bishop Pothinus, trembling under the weight of ninety years, replied to the magistrate who asked him what god he worshipped: "Thou shalt know Him when thou art worthy."* Covered with wounds, he was cast into prison, where in two days he expired. Blandina, the young slave-girl, triumphed in the midst of all tortures, and inspired her brother, of the same tender years, with her own enthusiasm and courage. This child of fifteen, frail and weak by nature as others, displayed extraordinary moral power; neither tortures nor wild beasts could make her falter. The Christians feared for her, but it was she who strengthened their faith. Before the whole circus, full of a howling crowd, in view of the gaping mouth of the lion, she stood calm and smiling; and that calm smile of the poor slave was the boldest challenge ever hurled at the material omnipotence of the pagan empire.† This strong defiance, coming from the servile dust in which the slave had been wont to crouch till Christianity proclaimed the rights of conscience, made heathen society learn with a thrill of dread that the humblest believer in Christ is a power not to be ignored. "God shows us in this young slave," we read in the letter of the Christians of Lyons, "that His choice rests upon that which seems to men most vile, contemptible, and ignoble."‡

There came a momentary pause in the persecution. The proconsul found himself embarrassed by the number, and sometimes by the quality of the captives, for many were Roman citizens, and the majesty of that

* *Ἐὰν ᾖς ἄξιος γνώσῃ.* (Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," p. 306.)
† Ibid., p. 315. ‡ Ibid., p. 301.

name might not be profaned, even when associated with the vile name of Christian, by their condemnation to ignominious punishment. The emperor, when interrogated on this matter, replied that the Roman citizens who persevered in their faith were to be beheaded, apostates released, and all other accused persons subjected to the extreme penalties of the law. This order was rigorously carried out, and floods of Roman blood flowed in the prisons. The accused belonging to the lower classes perished in the arena, amidst the plaudits of the multitudes, and even Blandina, of whom the very wild beasts at first seemed to stand in awe, fell at last a victim. The brief time of respite was used by many Christians (who had proved for a season untrue to their faith) in retracing their apostasy. They astonished the people by this return of courage, which did not again fail in the face of death. The persecution raged with equal violence at Vienna in Gaul, and at Autun, where Symphorian perished for refusing to worship the goddess Cybele. The martyrs of this period were remarkable for their great humility, joined with a lively joy altogether devoid of fanaticism. They refused even to be called martyrs, as not worthy of the name.* They did no more, they said, than follow the Lamb whithersoever He went,† and first of all to the altar of sacrifice. They were distinguished by a majesty and beauty more than human, and their bonds seemed the jewels of their sanguinary espousals.‡ Their various agonies were to

* Οὔτε μὴν ἡμῖν ἐπέτρεπον τοῦτῳ τῳ ὀνόματι προσαγορεύειν αὐτούς. ("Reliq. Sacræ," p. 320.)

† Ἀκολουθῶν τῷ ἀρνιῳ, ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ. (Ibid., p. 298.)

‡ Ibid., p. 308.

them as the weaving of a wreath of divers flowers to be offered unto God the Father,* from whom they looked to receive the crown laid up for the victor in the fight.

The death of Marcus Aurelius, which was a calamity to the empire, was a deliverance to the Church. Commodus, the frenzied tyrant who brought back the worst days of the early Cæsars, showed himself tolerant towards the Christians. Persecution, if not absolutely suppressed, was greatly modified, and received no fresh impetus from imperial decrees. Marcia, the favourite mistress of Commodus, appears to have been, if not positively attached to the Church, at least well disposed to the new religion. It is probable that before her elevation to her throne of shame, she had been among the proselytes. She remained ever the protector of her former co-religionists, and, according to St. Hippolytus, even succeeded in gaining the recall to Rome of a large number of exiles, who had been banished to work in the mines in Sicily.† Irenæus mentions that there were many Christians at the court of Commodus in the enjoyment of large liberty.‡ The old statutes against their religion had not, however, been repealed, and the Church still numbered several martyrs, among others the Senator Apollonius.§ Antoninus, a proconsul of

* Ἐκ διαφόρων γὰρ χρωμάτων καὶ παντοίων ἀνθῶν ἕνα πλεξαντες στέφανον. ("Reliq. Sacræ," p. 307.)

† Ἡ Μαρκία οὖσα φιλόθεος ἔργον τι ἀγαθὸν ἐργάσασθαι θελήσασα. ("Philosophoumena," p. 287.) See also M. de Witte's article entitled, "Du christianisme de quelques imperatrices romaines," p. 5. Paris, 1853.

‡ "Contr. Hæres.," IV. 30.

§ Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. V. c. 21; Hieronym., "Catol.," c. xlii. Neander, relying upon this last witness, asserts that Apollonius was denounced by his slave, and that the latter was put to death for laying information against his master. (Vol. I. p. 201.) [Eng.

Asia Minor, who sought to revive the persecution, was deterred from doing so by the number of Christians who thronged to his tribunal voluntarily to surrender themselves. He contented himself with apprehending a few, saying to the rest: "Wretches, if you desire to die, you have rocks and ropes at hand." *

The Church which was engaged throughout this period in such stern struggles with enemies without, had to maintain an equally severe conflict with foes within. Heresy, of which we have already noted the indications, and of which we shall follow the progress,† is no longer in this, as in the first century, a vague and formless thing. Its various characteristics are clearly defined. While the Judaising sects are passing through a crisis, which, separating the moderate from the fanatical party, will finally issue in the development of Ebionitism, Eastern Gnosticism is yet more surely corrupting Christian doctrine by its wild and fantastic speculations—the thin veil cloaking a fatalistic Pantheism. At Alexandria, Basilides (A.D. 125) and Valentine exerted in turn an extraordinary influence; the latter endeavoured to establish his school at Rome about the year 140. The Gnostics of Syria professed a more open dualism than those of Egypt. The Church of Antioch had to resist Saturnin, that of Edessa to oppose Bardesanes and Tatian. The latter, at

Trans., p. 163, Bohn's Ed.] But Gieseler brings forward passages of Roman law which set aside this supposition. A slave who proved the charge he brought was not put to death. (Gieseler, Vol. I. p. 177.)

* Ὦ δειλοί. εἰ θέλετε αποθνήσκειν, κρημνοὺς ἤ βρόχους ἔχετε. (Tertullian, "Ad Scapulam," c. v.)

† We shall consider the great heresies in detail in a subsequent volume devoted especially to this subject.

first a disciple of Justin Martyr, finally became a heretic. Marcion, son of the Bishop of Sinope, was the author of a system superior in many respects to the speculative theories of the other Gnostics, but not less destructive of the foundation truths of positive Christianity. At Rome he encountered Polycarp, who denounced him in a terrible apostrophe as a child of the devil.

In the year 170, a fanatic sect, preaching the most rigid asceticism, arose in Phrygia. It blended with a very sincere piety much of the extravagant superstition of that country. Montanism, founded by the Phrygian Montanus, profoundly agitated the Church of the second century. It made its appearance at Rome towards the end of that period, and there performed an important part. The Church itself was also torn with internal dissensions, apart from heresies. The determination of the Easter festival was a question which divided East and West. The Bishop of Rome excited a lively resistance, when he endeavoured to enforce his own practice on the whole Church.* On this occasion, towards the close of the second century, were held the Synods of Cesaræa and of Lyons, which foiled for the time this ambitious project.

* We shall enter subsequently into details of the internal dissensions in the Church.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHURCH OF THE EMPIRE, FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE THIRD CENTURY TO CONSTANTINE.

§ I. *The Syrian Princes.* (193-235.)

After the murder of Commodus, the Empire was shaken with profound convulsions, creating what seemed anarchy even in that age of social disorganisation, when every accession to the throne was signalised, as a matter of course, by sanguinary conflicts. The imperial purple, after adorning for a few honourable days the virtuous Pertinax, was put up to auction by the soldiery, and bought by Didius Julianus, who had no security for keeping it, when once the last gold piece of the appointed price was paid, and the Pretorians had ceased to regard him as a solvent debtor. While Albinus was proclaimed by the legion of Britain, and Niger by the legion of Syria, Septimus Severus, at the head of the army of Illyria, advanced upon Rome, avenged upon the Pretorians the death of Pertinax, and after attacking in succession both his competitors, re-united the whole empire under his dominion. (197.) Under cover of the troubles arising out of this war of the succession, the enemies of the Church found more than one occasion to let loose upon it the unchained passions of the people, no longer under the restraint of any organised authority. Clement of Alexandria tells us that every

day the blood of innocent Christians flowed in torrents, that they were burned, crucified, and beheaded.* Tertullian's address to the martyrs belongs to these stormy days, when persecution, without any fresh authoritative sanction, constantly burst forth at all points under the pressure of popular fanaticism. Tertullian designed to raise the courage of the Christians, and to pour the bright beams of hope into the dark dungeons where they were suffering in crowds. "O ye blessed captives," he wrote, "grieve not the Holy Spirit who has entered with you into the prison. In truth, if He had not entered with you, you yourselves would not be there to-day. The prison is the devil's house in which he lodges his family. You have only entered it that you may tread him under foot in his own abode, as you have already trampled on him in crossing the threshold. . . . Suffer him not to say, 'They are come into my home; I will tempt them with base disputings and envyings; I will provoke them to defection and dissension.' Your peace is deadly war with him." Setting in vivid contrast the world from which the confessors have come out, and the dungeon into which they have entered, Tertullian shows them that in reality the worst of prisons is this accursed world. "Deeper is its darkness, heavier the chains with which it binds the immortal soul. It num-

* Ἡμῖν δὲ ἄφθονοι μαρτύρων πηγαὶ ἑκάστης ἡμέρας ἔν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν θεωρούμεναι παροπτωμένων, ἀνασκινδαλευομένων, τὰς κεφαλὰς ἀποτεμνομένων. (Clement of Alexandria, "Stromates," II. XX. 125.) Neander ("Antignosticus," p. 17) establishes very clearly the date of the first books of the "Stromates," for Clement does not carry the chronology of Roman history beyond the end of the reign of Commodus. ("Stromates," I. 21; II. 139.) We may conclude, therefore, that Septimus Severus had not yet ascended the throne.

bers more captives than the most crowded prison; does it not hold in bondage the whole human race, which is cited, not to the bar of a proconsul, but before the judgment-seat of God?"* "Your cell is dark," he says again, "but you are its light. You are in chains, but you are the Lord's freedmen. You are summoned before a judge, but you shall judge your judges.† The prison, like a sacred retreat, hides from the prisoner the sight of evil. There he prepares himself to resist unto blood. It is not from a couch of ease men go forth to fight.‡ If the athlete submits to severest discipline, shall the Christian athlete complain of the painful process to which he is subjected,—he, who is led into the arena by Christ Himself, and anointed with the holy oil of the Spirit? God is his judge, eternity his crown. Courage grows strong by enduring hardness; it faints in ease and luxury.§ What! shall the Christian hesitate when earthly glory has made so many heroes who have not shrunk from death, and when death, ever at hand, may at any moment carry us off by the most common accident?"

These manly exhortations were well adapted to encourage the hearts of the prisoners, and to impart to them at once the firmness which makes the soul strong to endure, and the enthusiasm which raises it above suffering and transfigures even the most terrible of tortures.

* "Plures reos continet, scilicet universum hominum genus, judicia denique non proconsulis sed Dei sustinet." (Tertullian, "Ad Martyr.," c. ii.)

† "Habet tenebras sed lumen estis ipsi, habet vincula sed vos soluti Deo estis. Judex expectatur, sed vos estis de judicibus ipsis iudicaturi." (Ibid.)

‡ "Nec de cubiculo ad aciem procedit." (Ibid., c. iii.)

§ "Virtus duritia extruitur, mollitia vero destruitur." (Ibid.)

They would sorely need such support, as persecution became more hot and cruel. The new emperor was at first well disposed towards the Church. It appears that he had been cured of a serious malady by a Christian named Proculus, who, according to the custom of the early Church, had prayed over him, anointing him with oil.* He kept his benefactor in the palace as long as he lived, and it was perhaps at the instigation of Proculus that he chose a Christian nurse for his son Caracalla. He was too much preoccupied with serious matters at the commencement of his reign, to devote much attention to the persecution of the Church, which gave him, moreover, no cause for disquietude, as in these troublesome times the Christians had distinguished themselves by their submission to the laws and avoidance of all sedition. Determined even to hardness, a despot rather than a tyrant, bent on breaking down all opposition, uniting much narrowness of mind with indomitable resolution, Severus was a man who, both from his good and bad qualities, was liable at any moment to become a formidable persecutor. He had a strong tendency to superstition, and his passing leniency towards Christianity was owing, no doubt, to the fact that he regarded it as a high form of magical art, effecting marvellous cures by new incantations. It would be easy to turn in a contrary direction, sentiments so little in harmony with the new religion, sentiments, too, which would find ample scope in the paganism of the day. It was after a journey into Asia Minor and the East, that a change of disposition became observable in the emperor. It is ascribed in part to the violent fanaticism of the sect of

* Tertullian, "Ad Scapulam," c. iv.

the Montanists, which had spread widely in Syria, and which, by proclaiming the approaching destruction of the empire and of the world, suggested the idea that it might take an active part in the fulfilment of its own sinister prophecy. It is more reasonable to regard, as the first cause of the renewal of persecution, the impression produced upon Severus by his travels in the East, which was then the nursery and hotbed of all manner of superstition. He could not with impunity be brought into contact with the priests of those ancient religions, the secret of whose success lay in the obscurity in which they were involved, suggesting that in their deep mysteries there might be found satisfaction for all the aspirations of the soul. Egypt was always the land of magic and mystery; it had become to the world that which Eleusis once was to Greece. The worship of Isis and of Osiris, still more that of Serapis, which, like the worship of Ceres and Proserpine, seemed to illuminate the dark kingdom of death, and to facilitate the transit from this life to another, drew innumerable adherents, among whom the emperor Severus took his place.* The priests did not fail to use their influence upon so powerful a disciple, to stir up his hostility to a religion the progress of which alarmed them, and which offered the calm shining of a sure hope, in place of the false and fitful gleams which they shed upon the tomb. It is possible that a special circumstance tended to aggravate the danger of the Christians. Public games were being celebrated in Africa with great pomp, in honour of the triumph of the emperor over his rivals, and for the first time the Pythian games were performed at Carthage.

* Milman, "History of Christianity," Vol. I. p. 35.

Some writers think that it was on this occasion Tertullian wrote his treatise, "On the Spectacles," in which he demonstrates, with his usual vehemence, that the duty of a disciple of Christ is to abstain from these cruel pastimes, which were so often shameful, and always stained with idolatry, and which were proscribed, if not by the letter at least by the spirit of the sacred writings. This treatise of Tertullian's, which belongs at any rate to this period, proves that the more earnest Christians had conscientious scruples about attending the games in the circus. Their absence, irritating to their countrymen, who regarded it as an indirect condemnation of themselves, might easily be misconstrued to the emperor or his proconsuls, especially when these public feasts were of a political character.*

These various circumstances sufficiently account for the revival of persecution. Severus, on his transit through Asia Minor (A.D. 203), issued a decree, which by condemning the propagation of new doctrines, and change from one religion to another, aimed a direct blow at a faith which lived by proselytism.† The decree of Trajan, which proscribed the very name of Christian and laid it under the ban of the law, seemed to render fresh penal measures unnecessary. The measures taken, however, contributed constantly to aggravate persecution by giving the judges new counts of indictment. Trajan had intended only to punish Christianity in its undeniable manifestations. Septimus Severus struck at it in its mode of propaga-

* Munter, "Primordia Ecclesiæ Africanæ," p. 198.

† "In itinere Palæstinis Judæos fieri sub grave pœna vetuit. Idem etiam de Christianis sanxit." ("Spartianus," c. xvii.)

tion, in its missionary activity, and he put the magistrate on the track of minute inquiries full of peril to the Church. It seems that at first some proconsuls showed a spirit of toleration, and endeavoured to save the accused, whom they knew to be innocent, sometimes inflicting a slight penalty, sometimes condemning them on a charge to which the punishment of death was not annexed.* Encouraged by this disposition to leniency, many Christians tried by various methods to escape the impending sentence. Some bought safety by paying a sum of money, either to the informer who was about to betray them, or to the soldier who came to seize them, or to some corruptible and interested judge, of whom there were many in the pagan tribunals.† Tertullian expressed himself with just indignation against such proceedings, in his treatise on "Fleeing from Persecution," written at this period, and already strongly imbued with the exaggerations of Montanism. "Can anything," he says, "be more unworthy of God and of His work, of that God who spared not His own Son for thee, than to ransom with a few gold pieces a man who has been redeemed with the blood of Christ? The sun grew pale before the splendour of our redemption; our freedom was wrested from hell and covenanted in heaven. The everlasting doors were uplifted that the King of Glory might come in—the Lord of all power and might, who had won man back for heaven from earth, nay, rather from hell. Who is the madman who will fight against Him? Who will degrade and sully that which He has

* This may be inferred from chap. iv. of the Letter to Scapula.

† "Pacisceris cum delatore vel milite, vel furunculo aliquo præside." (Tertullian, "De Fuga in Persecutione," c. xii. 1.)

purchased at the dear price of His most precious blood? Flee, rather than sell thyself so cheap, setting so low a price upon that which Christ has so highly esteemed. What! shall a Christian be saved by money? Shall his gold redeem him from suffering? Would not this be to be rich against his God, while Christ poured forth His own blood for him?"* This shameful bargain is true simony, and in reply to the excuse urged that it was a Christian duty to pay tribute to Cæsar, Tertullian replies by this noble utterance: "If I owe tribute to Cæsar, do I not owe my blood to God, in return for that of His Son shed for me?"†

The writer had less foundation for his reproaches of the Christians and Christian bishops, who in great numbers sought safety from persecution in flight. This they did often from a sense of their own weakness, fearing lest they might, in the trying hour, fall into apostasy. In this respect they were justified in appealing to the example and precept of Jesus Christ, who Himself, on various occasions, retreated from places where danger threatened, saying that His hour was not yet come. The ardent polemic, in rebuking them by the maxims of a fearless and reckless boldness, spoke rather at the dictation of fanatic zeal than of Christian wisdom, which, while it encourages true heroism, never fosters temerity. When Tertullian adduces in support of his position, the blessings derived by the Church from persecution, in renewed zeal and deepened piety,‡ he

* "Adversus Deum erit dives; at enim Christus sanguine fuit dives pro illo." (Tertullian, "De Fuga in Persecutione," c. xii. 1.)

† "Quid autem Deo debeo, sicut denarium Cæsari, nisi sanguinem, quem pro me filius fudit ipsius?" (Ibid. c. xii.) ‡ Ibid., c. i.

proves too much; for, logically starting from such a principle, he ought to go on to say that the Christian should not use any remedies in sickness, since sickness, too, is salutary discipline. To assert that to flee from apostasy is tantamount to having already apostatised, is an inexcusable exaggeration. Tertullian comes back to the limits of sound Christian reason, when he declares that he cannot sanction any discontinuance of worship by the members of the Church on account of persecution. "If thou canst not gather the flock together by day," he says, "thou canst by night; Jesus Christ will be a bright light to thee, dispelling the darkness. If all the brethren cannot meet together, where three Christians are in a company, there thou shalt find a Church."*

At the commencement of the persecution under Severus, a strange circumstance occurred, which called forth a new treatise from Tertullian, characterised by the same exaggeration. A Christian soldier had refused the crown of laurel, which the legionaries were accustomed to carry before the emperor in token of joy, when they received some fresh gift from his munificence. Opinions were divided in the Church about this act; it was forbidden by the illustrious African in terms of extravagant reprobation. Full of sarcasm and bitterness against those timid Christians who are lions in the days of peace, and lambs in the day of battle,† Tertullian scornfully sets aside their objections. The tradition

* "Si colligere interdiu non potes, habes noctem. Sit tibi et in tribus Ecclesia." (Tertullian, "De Fuga in Persecutione," c. xiv.)

† "In pace leones, in prælio cervos." (Tertullian, "De Corona Milit.," c. i.)

of the Church, he says, if not Scripture itself, is opposed to a custom so essentially pagan.* Nature, which is also a divine volume, made the flowers to adorn the fields and perfume the air, not to wither in a garland curiously twined by the hand of man. No saint or prophet wore a crown, and the crown of Christ was of thorns.† Beside, these military garlands represented the mourning of widows and the tears of mothers, and the Christian should not forget that he has brethren among the pagans. From these considerations, Tertullian, as a consistent Montanist, argues the incompatibility of piety with military service. He sums up his views in this lofty utterance, admirable indeed if only applied with discernment: "Faith acknowledges no plea of necessity."‡

While thus making full allowance for a certain extravagance in the severity of Tertullian, we cannot fail to perceive that there was at the commencement of this persecution, some relaxation of Christian courage. The Church showed itself more concerned than formerly to avoid danger: it was more prudent. This disposition, lawful in itself if only it can be harmonised with inflexible adherence to duty, needed to be carefully watched, the more so as the Christians found at their side dangerous sophists, ready to supply cowardice with all the subterfuges of a subtle and perverted exegesis. The Gnostics, those proud contemners of Christian simplicity, claimed to be the representatives of truth everywhere, except in the circus and at the stake, and

* Tertullian, "De Corona Milit.," c. iii. † Ibid., c. iv.

‡ "Non admittit status fidei allegationem necessitatis." (Ibid., c. xi.)

they directed their polemics against martyrdom. These spiritual men, with all their boasted freedom from fleshly bonds, would not expose to torture and the flames, the body they so affected to despise. But neither were they willing that others should take the palm, the cost of which held back their own shrinking hands. Their insidious arguments, into which the sacred text was freely woven, might shake the constancy of Christians, or, at least, tend to relax or to corrupt what might be called the public spirit of the Church, which lends the strongest impulse to individual devotedness. Tertullian felt it his duty to unmask these miserable sophistries in his treatise "Against the Gnostic Scorpions." It is plain from the vituperative appellation thus given to the heretics in the very title of his book, in what a spirit of bitterness he entered upon the contest. He was not wrong in supposing that there was peril for the Christians of his day in these sophistical arguments. If he errs in this treatise by magnifying the value of martyrdom at the expense of the great doctrine of free salvation, * we are bound, nevertheless, to recognise and approve its general purport. He shows, with his usual ability, that nothing is more conformable to the will of God than suffering for truth. The Divine words which proclaim the blessedness of those who thus suffer, are as applicable to every age as is the promise of the Holy Spirit given with them. † The formal interdiction of idolatry renders martyrdom inevitable, and this should be no ground of complaint, for it is a heroic remedy against evil. To die for the Gospel, is to fall into the hands of God,

* Tertullian, "Contra Gnosticos Scorpiac.," c. vi. † Ibid., c. ii.

there to find supreme blessedness.* The annals of the truth upon earth are but one long martyrology. From its earliest manifestation it was met with hatred.† Its progress may be tracked through the world by the bleeding footprints it has left This is true from Abel to Paul, who bought a second time with his blood at Rome his right to the citizenship. This is supremely true of the Divine Master, and Tertullian shows, with touching eloquence, how His cross is a sacred legacy to all who are His. ‡ Having disposed of the absurd notion of the Gnostics, that confession of the name of the Saviour was to be made in a world higher than ours, he refutes the more specious objection derived by them from the duty of submission to the civil authorities. He points out that we owe obedience to the sovereign only so long as he abides within his own domain, and does not demand divine honours.§ "Let us suppose, for a moment," he says, "that the letters of the Apostles have lost their natural meaning, does not the truth come out clearly from their sufferings? Let us only glance through the Acts of the Apostles. What do we see but bonds and imprisonments, scourgings and stonings, drawn swords, risings of the Jews, tumults of the pagans? This book is, as it were, written with the blood of the Apostles,‖ and, if need be, the annals of the empire themselves will cry out like the stones of Jerusalem, in confirmation of the testimony of Holy Writ. In reading these narratives, I learn to

* "Incedisti in manus Dei, sed feliciter incedisti." (Tertullian, "Contra Gnosticos Scorpiac.," c. vi.)

† "Statim ut coli Deus cœpit, invidiam religio sortitur." (Ibid., c. viii.) ‡ Ibid., c. x., xi. § Ibid., c. xiv.

‖ "Ipsorum sanguine scripta sunt." (Ibid.)

suffer." The writer makes large use of the bold reply of Paul to the Christians of Cesaræa, who, alarmed for his safety by the prediction of Agabus, sought in the eagerness of fond affection to detain him, and to hinder his going up to Jerusalem, there to meet with bonds and perhaps death. Tertullian applies this circumstance with crushing vehemence to those who gave to the Christians of his time cowardly counsels of defection. He says: "If Prodicus and Valentine had presented themselves to Paul in order to suggest to him that our confession was not to be made before men upon earth, because God does not thirst for human blood, they would have heard the servant of God saying to them, as Christ said to the tempter, 'Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me.'" *

While he was thus sustaining in the Church the cause of martyrdom, Tertullian was pleading the cause of toleration with the pagan authorities, in a book which, in spite of the inferiority of the language, recalled, while it surpassed, all that ancient eloquence had achieved of the dramatic and impressive. There was wanting, doubtless, that concentrated strength, that suppleness and harmony of a perfect style, which distinguished Demosthenes; nor did he display that pure transparency of diction which Cicero sustained amid the fiercest storms of political passion. In the mere matter of form, we find ourselves, in Tertullian's writings, in the midst of the period of the decline, and the language of his "Apology" shows all the defects of the age; his phrases are broken and

* Tertullian, "Contra Gnosticos Scorpiac.," c. xv.

inharmonious, and he abounds in forced antitheses. Nevertheless, we do not hesitate to place among the very masterpieces of the human mind this incorrect harangue, so mightily is it moved with a great impulse. It is the prophecy of the future, the inspiration of an ardent assurance. Never did oppressed truth and justice utter speech more bold, elevated, and enthusiastic. Never did moral superiority more grandly assert itself in presence of material might, bent upon crushing it. We have here, not only a passionate protestation, but also a luminous demonstration, in which the force of reasoning equals the vivacity and brightness of the style. Thus, while in his other writings Tertullian has too often spoken in the name of a sect or a party, in his "Apology" he has spoken for the whole Church; and in spite of the violent attacks which he subsequently directed against her, she has never forgotten the service he thus rendered in constituting himself her advocate.

In a previous treatise, dedicated "To the Nations," we find the first rough draft of the "Apology," and the precious fragments which remain give us the first upspringing of the writer's thought, in all its freshness and spontaneity. The "Apology" itself first replies to all the charges brought against the new religion, and then, taking hold of them, flings them back in the face of paganism, against which they are no calumnies.* We postpone to that portion of our book which will deal with the philosophical and theological

* It is plain from c. iv., in which Tertullian speaks of a law just abrogated by Severus, that the "Apology" belongs to the reign of that emperor.

apology of the first centuries, all that has reference to the exposition, properly speaking, of doctrine, and the arguments against polytheism and pagan philosophy. We regard the "Apology" now as a judicial plea, not as the discussion of a theory. Tertullian addresses himself first of all to that which may be termed the point of right. He holds up unsparingly to reprobation the mode of procedure pursued towards the Christians, the abrogation in their case alone, of all the protective forms of justice, and the iniquity of a summary condemnation based only upon the presumption of a detested name. "Far from seeking the light, the judges use every endeavour to exclude it; they prefer not to be enlightened in that which they are predetermined to hate.* They receive against the Christians accusations without proof, and will make no inquiry to discover that that which they desire to believe has no foundation in fact. Who can speak of the respect due to the laws, in presence of iniquitous edicts promulgated by the worst emperors, and appealed to by men who openly violate laws the most ancient and honourable? What has become of the statutes repressing luxury and ambition? I see to-day feasts of a hundred thousand sestertii, called on that account centenaries. I see the precious metals lavishly used in the service of the table, I say not of senators only, or of men free-born, but of those who but yesterday were slaves. I see theatres multiplied and prodigally adorned. I see the same garments worn by Roman ladies and by courtesans. Where is piety and veneration for ancestors? You affect neither their apparel nor their austerity, neither their maxims nor

* "Malunt nescire quia jam oderunt." (Tertullian, "Apol," c. i.)

their plainness of speech. You have for ever on your lips the praises of the past, while your life diverges from it day by day.* That which is of graver moment is that the ancient religion is no less corrupted than ancient manners; bear witness all ye divinities of Egypt and the East which encumber Rome! Do we not see Serapis and Isis side by side with Jupiter?"

Proceeding to the charges laid against the Christians, Tertullian reduces them to five heads. The Christians are accused, first, of infamous crimes; but this imputation rests wholly upon idle rumour, upon the wind, upon hearsay. The defender of the Church does not condescend to offer any detailed justification in answer to such abominable slanders. He appeals to simple humanity. "The Christian," he exclaims, "is as much a man as thou, his accuser." † "Furthermore, it well becomes those who practise the infamies with which they reproach us, to bring forward such accusations. Do not the pagans every day expose their own children? Is not their worship a worship of voluptuousness and of blood?" ‡

On the second charge, that of abandoning the gods of the empire for a new and strange god, Tertullian enters into a long disquisition. After tracing the national worship to its origin, and showing that these pretended gods were but men, and men of the worst sort, or to speak more truly, demons, since they have

* "Laudatis semper antiquitatem et novo de die vivitis." (Tertullian, "Apologia," c. vi.)

† "Homo est enim et Christianus et quod es tu." (Ibid. c. xxviii.)

‡ Ibid., c. ix.

headed, and still head, a veritable school of crime; after proving that they are in truth despised and ridiculed by their worshippers themselves, who have no scruple in letting them be made the subject of the buffooneries of the theatre, he draws in broad outline the Christian doctrine, and sets forth its true beauty.*

We have already quoted elsewhere his noble reply to the charge of rebellion, the third point in the indictment of the enemies of the Church. In tracing with a firm hand the line of demarcation between spiritual and secular societies, he maintains the rights of God and those of the emperor; and he can without servility, and in the name of religious duty, show that the Christian scrupulously obeys the laws of the empire, that he has no part in the seditions which are constantly arising, and that he never ceases to pray for his persecutors. "The Church, which is no longer a small sect, but is spread over the whole empire, knows her strength; if she does not use it, it is because she has learned to respect in the temporal powers a divine institution." †

The Christians were told that it was they who drew down upon the empire the terrible scourges with which it was visited—war, famine, pestilence. "Let us be told then," replies Tertullian, "why these plagues did not await our coming. The Christian sect had no existence when a storm of fire devoured the country around Sodom and Gomorrah. The earth is still breathing forth the smoke of that conflagration. ‡ There was no worshipper of the true God in Rome when Hannibal,

* Tertullian, "Apologia," c. x.-xxviii. † Ibid., c. xxix.-xl.
‡ "Olet adhuc incendio terra." (Ibid., c. xi.)

after Cannæ, measured by bushels the rings of the Roman knights slain on the battle-field. All your gods were adored by all the citizens when the Gauls took possession of the Capitol.* No calamity has befallen your cities which has not struck the temples as well as the ramparts; the gods could not have been the authors of disasters of which they themselves were the victims. Cease, then, to attribute these visitations to a senseless cause. The crimes of humanity are many enough and flagrant enough, to explain the severity of the Divine chastisements. Mankind has always merited ill of Deity.† If some scourges are spared, it is due to the prayers of the Christians; for, while the pagans abandon themselves to a thousand idle practices, while they live on in debauch, while they haunt places of ill-fame, and at the same time sacrifice to Jupiter and seem to expect the descent of rain from the vaults of their temples, the Christians, wasted and wounded, deprived of all the joys of life, covered with sackcloth and ashes, implore grace from heaven; and yet, when their prayers are heard, it is to Jupiter the incense is offered.‡ If it is asked why do these favourites of the Deity share in the ills so largely dispensed to the world, they reply that these ills touch them not. They have no concern for anything in this world, unless it be for this one thing—to be speedily delivered from it."§

* "Omnes dei vestri ab omnibus colebantur cum ipsum Capitolium Senones occupaverunt." (Tertullian, "Apologia," c. xl.)

† "Semper humana gentes male de Deo meruit." (Ibid.)

‡ "Jejuniis aridi et omni continentia expressi in sacco et cinere volutantes Deum tangimus, Jupiter honoratur a vobis." (Ibid.)

§ "Nihil nostra refert in hoc ævo, nisi de eo quam celeriter excidere." (Ibid., c. xli.)

These considerations bring Tertullian to the refutation of the last indictment against the Christians, that of withdrawing from common life, and being useless members of society. He has no difficulty in showing that a Christian remains in the world, though he separates himself from the evil of it. To the objection that through the Christians the revenues of the altar are diminished, Tertullian replies that the Church cannot succour at the same time the mendicity of gods and men, and she prefers to distribute to those whose needs are manifest. Let Jupiter stand and beg by the roadside, and he shall receive an alms! Christian charity gives larger offerings to the poor in the streets than the pagans carry to their temples.* In very truth, he adds, it is not our austerity, but your barbarities which alienate so many thousands of the citizens.

Some pages are devoted to the refutation of the principal objections of pagan philosophy. They conclude very wisely thus: "Even supposing our dogmas were utter folly, they would do no harm to any one; they would, in that case, only resemble many other idle and foolish notions, which incur no penalty because they are innocent. Such errors ought to be punished by ridicule, not by sword and fire, the cross and the wild beasts of the arena."† The peroration of the "Apology" reads like the triumphal pæan of martyrdom. "I am a Christian," says Tertullian, "only because I will so to be. You condemn me therefore only at my pleasure.

* "Cum interim plus nostra misericordia insumit vicatim quam vestra religio templatim." (Tertullian, "Apologia," c. xlii.)

† "In ejusmodi errores, si utique, irrisu judicandum est, non gladiis et ignibus et crucibus et bestiis." (Ibid., c. xlix.)

If, then, you can only use your power against me by my own consent, that power depends in fact not upon your will but mine. Let the crowd applaud our sufferings as it will. Those sufferings are our triumph, for we love rather to be condemned of men than to be forsaken of God. Our enemies ought to mourn instead of rejoicing, for we have obtained that which we chose.* Why complain then, you will say, of a persecution which pleases you? You ought to highly esteem those who procure for you these coveted sufferings. We, indeed, freely accept our sufferings, we reply, as men accept war, which none like for its own sake, but the perils and pains of which they readily endure in case of need. Though they love not war, nevertheless they fight with all their strength, and the conqueror, who at first murmured at the necessity to fight, rejoices in the end because of the glory and the spoils which he has won in the combat. Our battle-field is the tribunal, where we fight for truth at the peril of our life. Victory consists in gaining that for which men have fought; our victory is the glory of pleasing God, and our gain is eternal life. We are put to death; what of that? Death gives us our crown.† Our sacrifice is our triumph, and the foe who smites, delivers us. Revile us, if you will, because we are bound to a stake and burned with fuel of wood. That flaming vesture which enwraps us is our purple robe of royalty; thus it is we gain the palm and

* "Quum vero quod in me potes, nisi velim, non potes, jam meæ voluntatis est quod potes, non tuæ potestatis." (Tertullian, "Apologia," c. xlix.)

† "Sed obducimur certe cum obtinuimus; ergo vincimus cum occidimur, denique evadimus cum obducimur." (Ibid., c. l.)

mount the car of victory.* We can all understand the rage of those whom we have vanquished, and how in their fury they treat us as desperate men. And yet that which you scoff at in us, you regard as highest courage when inspired by fame and love of glory. Mutius Scævola, of his own free will, holds his hand in the fire of the altar till it is consumed. Most noble Mutius! Empedocles casts himself into the flames of Etna. Heroic spirit! The foundress of Carthage makes herself a victim on the funeral pile to avoid a second marriage. O glorious chastity! Regulus, giving his life as a ransom, endures a thousand agonies. O true patriot! O conquering captive! O glory! (say we) owned and lauded because it is human, not regarded as the madness of ruined and desperate men, though it leads to the contempt of death, and of death's worst anguish. You tolerate these sacrifices because they are offered for country, for native land, for the empire, for friendship; if they were offered only to God, it would be another thing.† To these heroes you erect statues; you make their memory immortal by your marbles and monumental tablets; and so far as it can be done by such means, you procure for them a sort of resurrection from the dead. But if a man appears, who, in order that he may attain to the true resurrection, is ready to suffer for God, he is a fool! Go on your way, O excellent magistrates, the more excellent in the eyes of the

* "Licet nunc sarmenticios et semaxios appelletis, hic est habitus victoriæ nostræ hæc palmata vestis, tali curru triumphamus." (Tertullian, "Apologia," c. 1.)

† "Tantum pro patria, pro agro, pro imperio, pro amicitia pati permissum est, quantum pro Deo non licet." (Ibid.)

people, the more victims you make of the Christians. Crucify us, torture us, condemn us, crush us: your iniquity is the strongest proof of our innocence. God permits that we endure such sufferings. By condemning Christian women to dishonour rather than to the lions, you prove that the stain of infamy is to us worse than all tortures.* Of what avail, in fine, is all the refinement of your cruelty, but to add one charm the more to our sect? Decimated by you, we grow in numbers; the martyrs' blood is the seed of the Church. Many of your philosophers have uttered noble exhortations to the courageous endurance of suffering and death, as Cicero in his 'Tusculana;' Seneca, Diogenes, and Pyrrho in their writings. Their eloquence made not so many disciples as the death of the Christians has made. This obstinacy with which you reproach them, is the most powerful teaching.† Who is there, who, in seeing them die, would not be stirred up to inquire what there is in their doctrine? Who, after such an examination into it, would not be ready to embrace it? Who, once enrolled beneath its standard, would not yearn to suffer for it? Therefore it is we render you thanks for your condemnation of us; since it is the declaration of the war of earth against heaven. Condemned by you, we are absolved by God." ‡

The pagan magistracy was not worthy to hear such

* In this sentence there is a play on the words *leno* and *leo*, which cannot be brought out in a translation.

† "Nec tamen tantos inveniunt verba discipulos quantos Christiani factis docendo. Illa ipsa obstinatio quam exprobratis magistra est." (Tertullian, "Apologia," c. 1.)

‡ "Ut est æmulatio divinæ rei et humanæ, cum damnamur a vobis a Deo absolvimur." (Ibid.)

words as these. This Tertullian well knew, and therefore he appealed to a tribunal higher than that of earth, which revoked in heaven the iniquitous decrees of human judges, before it overthrew the judges themselves, and the whole social edifice of which they were the supports. For the moment, no justice was to be looked for in the empire; and persecution, encouraged by Severus, went on raging fiercely against the Church. It broke out first in Egypt. The earliest blows fell upon the flourishing Church of Alexandria.* Surrounded with powerful enemies, who were irritated by its prosperity, it drew all eyes upon itself by its great school of apologists recently founded. The Christians from all points of the country flowed into the metropolis of Egypt. They came even from the depths of the desert, there to suffer martyrdom. Leonides, the father of Origen, was put to death in this persecution. A young woman, named Potamiæna, of singular beauty, who had resisted all solicitations and importunities, was distinguished by the firmness she maintained in the presence of her judges. She was moved neither by the threat of torture, nor by the thousand-fold more terrible threat of being given up to the gladiators, well knowing that if they could injure the body, they could not defile the soul. Basilides, one of the soldiers who led her out to suffer, was profoundly impressed by her calm courage in the midst of terrible anguish; he protected her against the vile outrages of the crowd, up to the very moment when she was thrown into the boiling pitch. A short time after he saw in a dream the young virgin

* Μάλιστα ἐπλήθυεν, ἐπ' Αλεξανδρείας. (Eusebius, "H. E.," Bk. VI. c. 1.)

smiling and triumphant, and she placed upon his head a crown, telling him she had prayed for him.* He understood at once at what price he must really win the offered crown. He embraced the first opportunity to confess his faith before his comrades in arms, by refusing to take a pagan oath. This was to devote himself to death, and in a few days he was with Potamiæna in the presence of the Lord.

The persecution was even more violent in proconsular Africa than at Alexandria. Everything tended to render it there peculiarly sanguinary. The Christian Church had, in the course of a few years, made extraordinary progress in that region. It had so increased as to threaten open peril, or to be at least a formidable enemy to the old religion of the empire. The African population had retained an element of barbarism under the outward forms of an advanced and corrupt civilisation. Violent and fanatic, it was bitterly hostile to the Christians. Its passions, heated under an African sun, rendered it insatiable in voluptuousness, furious in its hatred. It was more open than any other nationality to the influence of low superstitions, to the sorceries of the magicians, and to the infamous and cruel religions of the East, which had never wholly disappeared from its midst, and which were constantly springing afresh into life. Nowhere did persecution assume more decidedly the character of a tumult or popular rising.† The pro-

* Νύκτωρ ἐπιστᾶσα στέφανον αὐτοῦ τῇ κεφαλῇ περιθεῖσα εἴη, φαίη τε παρακεκληκέναι χάριν αὐτοῦ τὸν κύριον. (Eusebius, "H.E.," Bk. VI. c. 5.)

† See Munter, "Primordia Ecclesiæ Africanæ," p. 165-200, for information as to the state of Africa and the commencement of this persecution.

consul Saturninus took the initiative even before he was constrained to do so by the decree of Severus.* The first martyr was a poor slave of Punic origin, named Nymphonius. In the year 200, many Christians belonging to the little town of Scillita, were brought to Carthage, to appear before the tribunal of Saturnin. There were among them many women. Speratus, who spoke in the name of his brethren, was enabled, by the frankness and nobleness of his Christian spirit, to foil all the artifices of his captious questioner, to mark his respect at once for the laws of God and for those of the emperor, and to exhibit that union of gentleness and heroism, which is the distinctive trait of the true martyr. Speratus, when invited by Saturninus to swear by the genius of the emperor, replied that he knew not what was that genius; that for his part, he served the God of heaven, the King of kings, whom no man hath seen or can see, and that he prayed to Him for his sovereign, but could not do more without falling into idolatry. He remained immoveable, as did his companions in captivity; and when the proconsul offered him three days for reflection, he exclaimed that neither three days nor thirty would witness in him any change. The sentence of beheadal was pronounced and immediately executed.† Some years later, when the persecution had become general, one group of martyrs attracted especial observation. In it were found several female catechumens, who were in the flower of youth; and among others, two frail, delicate women, one of

* "Vigellius Saturninus qui primus hic gladium in nos egit." (Tertullian, "Ad Scapulam," c. iii.)

† See Ruinart's "Acta Martyrum."

whom, Perpetua, the daughter of a pagan father and a Christian mother, bore in her arms a new-born child; while the other, named Felicitas, was on the eve of motherhood. It was a piteous sight to behold the one nursing the tender infant at her breast in the wretched dungeon, and the other bringing her first-born into the world upon a noisome bed of straw. Perpetua was reserved for yet more heartrending trials. The horrors of captivity could not break her peace and joy of mind; we have already adverted to the glorious visions which lightened the darkness around her. One great solace was granted to the prisoners. The deacons of the Church had succeeded in administering baptism to them, and now they found their way, by using golden bribes, into the cells of the captives, and carried to them the holy communion. No tortures could avail to shake the steadfastness of these young women. The tears and supplications of a father were more hard to bear, because the grief of the old man made its appeal, not to the lower elements of human nature—the love of life and of ease—but to the highest and purest natural affections. Greater than Antigone, the Christian daughter, who in other circumstances would have made any sacrifice for a father, could yet, with a heart more deeply wounded by his grief than was her body by the instruments of torture, sacrifice the most sacred human affection to that stronger attachment which, with a holy jealousy, admits no hesitation and no reserve. This, as we have already observed, was the most bitter drop in her cup of sorrow. No words can describe the anguish she must have felt when the old man threw himself at her feet, kissing her hands and

watering them with his tears, while he besought her to give him back his child. "I weep," she exclaimed, "over the white hairs of my father. I groan because he is the only one of my family not to rejoice in my death. Know," she went on, "that we are not our own. We are in the hands of God." When, a few days after, at the festivals in honour of the proclamation of the young Cæsar Geta, she came forth with the other prisoners to fight with the wild beasts before a furious multitude, she suffered less from their rough embrace than she had endured under the caresses of her father. Her companion in captivity, the young Felicitas, revealed the secret of her heroism, when, in answer to her gaolers, who told her that the anguish of child-birth, aggravated as it was by prison horrors, would be as nothing to the agonies awaiting her in the circus, she replied: "Now it is I who suffer; but then another will suffer for me, because I shall be suffering for Him."

Septimus Severus left the empire, in the year 211, to his two sons Caracalla and Geta. This naturally gave rise to a deadly conflict between them, which could only be terminated by the violent death of one or the other. Caracalla, who had been on the eve of parricide, was not likely to cherish a more tender regard for the life of his brother. When he had achieved his criminal purpose, and through the blood of his brother mounted to the throne of the world, he gave the rein to all his vicious passions. He was another of those mighty madmen, who had all the treasures and armies of the empire at command to do their wild behests. Personating now Achilles and now Alexander, the imperial

actor went from place to place, giving representations which cost the people dear, and which were frequently turned into scenes of blood; as at Alexandria, where, as a punishment for some epigrams made at his expense, he slaughtered thousands of the unarmed citizens. This wretched and vile madman (who fell at length by the hand of Macrinus, a prefect of the guards) gave the sanction of the Roman legislature to the great social progress attending the onward movement of thought, in his famous decree according the rights of citizenship to all the free men of the empire. He thus broke down for ever the narrow barriers of the old nationalities.* The Church again enjoyed some respite during his reign, either because the Christian nurse, by whom he had been brought up, had favourably disposed him towards the new religion, or because, absorbed in his own follies, he had no leisure to attend to it. We cannot ascribe to Caracalla the persecution which raged in Africa in the year 211, under the proconsul Scapula, and which called forth the eloquent letter of Tertullian to that governor, already mentioned by us as the noblest vindication of religious freedom; that persecution was merely the continuation of the severe measures following on the decree of Severus. The epistle to Scapula is a concise, powerful epitome of the "Apology;" it defines with more clearness and vigour the rights of conscience, and flings back yet more boldly the challenge to the persecutors. "As for ourselves" (thus the letter opens), "we neither blanch nor

* See the very novel commentary on this important measure in "L'Histoire de l'Eglise et de l'Empire au quatrième siècle." (M. de Broglie, Vol. I. p. 31.)

tremble before the ills inflicted on us by those who know us not. The first condition for every one who enrols himself in this sect, is that he venture his life in the field; we have but one desire, to attain to that which God promises; we have but one fear, that of the pains of another life. All your cruelty cannot make us flinch from the conflict; we go forth to meet it, and are more happy when you strike than when you spare. If, then, we send you this epistle, it is not that we fear for ourselves; it is rather for your sake, who are our enemies.* Nay, what say I? you are our friends; for we are bound to love our enemies, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us; and herein is manifest the great virtue of our religion, for all men love their friends, but only Christians love their enemies. For your sake, because we grieve over your ignorance, and are filled with pity for human error,—because we know the future in store for you, and see every day the precursive signs of its approach,—we feel it incumbent to warn you by letters of that which you refuse to hear from our lips." †

A rapid refutation of the charges brought by the pagans, gives a keener point to the conclusive reasoning of the "Apology," and the author yet more distinctly asserts the liberty of religion. After showing that the Christian is not a sacrilegist, and in no way

* "Itaque hunc libellum, non nobis trimentes misimus, sed vobis et omnibus immicis nostris nedum amicis." (Tertullian, "Ad Scapulam," c. i.)

† "Qui ergo dolemus de ignorantia vestra et miseremur erroris humani et futura prospicimus et signa eorum quotidie intentari videmus necesse est vel hoc modo erumpere ad proponenda vobis ea quæ palam non vultis audire." (Ibid., c. i.)

resembles those miserable men who rob the gods of the empire in their own temples, all the while they are swearing by their name; after proving that he is no seditious person, since he calls upon God for the emperor, and offers the incense of his prayers to heaven on his rulers' behalf, Tertullian proceeds from the defensive to the offensive, and warns his persecutors of the impending wrath of Heaven, if they persevere in their evil course. "Has not the barrenness of the soil been a visitation for the prohibition recently laid upon the Christians to visit the tombs of their martyrs? Have not the torrents of rain in the past year menaced the earth with a second deluge? Have not wandering lights been seen by night on the walls of Carthage? Have there not been fearful mutterings of thunder? These are so many precursive signs of the anger of Heaven."* That anger has already fallen upon the persecutors, as Tertullian proves by astonishing facts, and he concludes with this bold apostrophe: "As for thee, Scapula, we desire that the present sickness may be but a warning. Remember that it came upon thee after thou hadst delivered Adrumeticus Mavil to the wild beasts."† "The Christians, innocent of the crimes with which they are charged, die for justice, chastity, loyalty, and truth. They are burned for the sake of the living God. If they were all to be extirpated, every family would be clothed in mourning." Again he exclaims: "Spare Carthage, spare thyself. We have but one master, that is God. He is above thee; He cannot be hidden, and thou canst do Him no

* "Omnia hæc signa sunt imminentis iræ Dei." (Tertullian "Ad Scapulam," c. iii.)

† Ibid., c. iii.

harm. Those whom thou callest thy masters are men, and will soon die; while this sect is immortal, and thou art only building it up while thou wouldst fain destroy it." *

The comparative security enjoyed by the Church under Caracalla continued during the two following reigns. Macrinus, the assassin of Caracalla, had but a brief rule of two months. He suffered not for his crime, but for his endeavours at reform; and after him (A.D. 218) the imperial crown passed to a young man, who, in the frame of an Apollo, carried a soul stained with all vice and infamy. This was Heliogabalus, great-nephew by his mother of the Empress Julia Domna, the wife of Septimus Severus. His name was borrowed from the Syrian god, whose high priest he was, and who, like all the great Oriental deities, was no other than the sun, the god of fecundity and of sensuous life. The reign of Heliogabalus was a wild bacchanal in honour of his impure idol. Nothing is more indicative of the fearful disorganisation of the age, than this open triumph of the old religion of Asia, celebrated at Rome itself by a successor of Augustus. It is the revenge of the East over the victorious West—an unworthy revenge, which only sullies that which it cannot supplant. Heliogabalus had a splendid temple built upon Mount Palatine for the Syrian deity. Thither he carried with great pomp the infamous symbol of his god, and all the ancient divinities of the empire were to form the train. Mars,

* "Magistrum neminem habemus nisi Deum solum. Hic ante te est. Ceterum quos putas tibi magistros, homines sunt et ipsi morituri quandoque. Nec tamen deficiet hæc secta, quam tunc magis ædificari cum cædi videtur." (Tertullian, "Ad Scapulam," c. v.)

Vesta, the Palladium—all that was held sacred at Rome —was transported to this sanctuary of abominations.* Before long Heliogabalus sought in his native country a consort for his god; he found one worthy to hold such a position in the ancient goddess of Asia and of Carthage—the Phœnician Astarte, who was honoured by murder and prostitution; and the nuptials of the Sun and Moon were celebrated with great magnificence from one end of the empire to the other. It is easy to conceive what must have been the feelings of those Romans who cherished the spirit of the past, when they beheld such spectacles, and were perhaps constrained to take part in them. We see in Heliogabalus a striking demonstration of the fact, that the religions of nature, left to their own course, end in the destruction of all that is natural. The laws of nature present to us an image of the moral world; they show the workings of the rule of order and obligation in this lower sphere. When the moral idea has been absolutely repudiated, law in any form becomes obnoxious, whether in the domain of nature or of conscience. Men take pleasure in infringing it; lawlessness is delighted in for its own sake. Hence the boundless extravagance, the indulgence of unnatural passions, the universal disorder, and the wild orgies of the reign of Heliogabalus. This young priest of the sun, arrayed in woman's garments, surrounded by a seraglio of youths, feasting upon such epicurean dainties as the tongues of nightingales, loving only infamous pleasures, was the faithful representative of the religion of Asia carried to its full consequences and to its last

* "Studens omnia Romanis veneranda in illud transferre templum." (Lamprid., "In Heliog.," c. iii.)

excesses. His predilection for everything Eastern, and his hatred of the West, predisposed him favourably to Christianity, of which he knew only this one thing, that it had been persecuted by the religion which he desired to destroy. It even appears that he had some notion of embracing, in the worship of the sun, all the religions of the earth, and specially that of the Jews and Samaritans, and of the Christian sect.* He imagined that as they were nurtured almost in the same cradle, these religions were also akin in their principles. If he had lived longer he would have soon learned his error, and the Christian Church would have infallibly become the object of his senseless fury. It was worthy to be hated by such a monster of iniquity. †

The successor of Heliogabalus was Alexander Severus, who appeared a second Marcus Aurelius, with less of severity and pride. The cousin of Heliogabalus through his mother Mammæa (by whom he had been trained up in every virtue), the new master of the world brought back the first days of the empire. The portrait drawn of him by his biographer is full of a melancholy charm. We feel that his noble aspirations are checked by insurmountable obstacles. The renovation of the empire had become an impossibility, and the imperial power, so terrible for evil, was impotent for good. It was not by a decree that the Senate could be restored to its true

* "Dicebat præterea Judæorum et Samaritanorum religiones et Christianam devotionem illuc transferendam ut omnium culturarum secretum Heliogabale sacerdotium teneret." (Lamprid., "In Heliog.," iii.)

† See Milman on the reign of Heliogabalus.

dignity; it needed to be cured of its deep-seated corruption. By attempting to restore discipline in the army, an emperor imperilled his personal safety, and devoted himself to certain death, as is proved by the premature end of Alexander Severus. Any restoration of religion was even more impracticable than political reform. It was vain to think of substituting for the popular superstition a religion more elevated but still impotent—such as was the religion of the more distinguished spirits of the time—a religion which united in a comprehensive eclecticism the best elements of the various religions of the past. Alexander Severus could do no more than open a little private chapel devoted to the objects of his own veneration, while the most hideous gods of Egypt and of Asia had gorgeous temples at Rome. It is well known that he set up in his palace statues to Orpheus and to Abraham, to Apollonius of Tyana, and to Christ,* to whom, indeed, he was disposed to dedicate a temple; † he thus rendered homage to the various influences then dividing the minds of men. He honoured at once the old Jewish revelations, and the ancient mysteries of Greece idealised in the person of Orpheus. He placed on the same level the mystical magic of an Eastern ascetic and Christianity; but this strange combination showed that the emperor had no true knowledge of the new religion. He may have been so struck with some of the beautiful maxims of Gospel morality, such as this, "Do unto others as

* "Matutinis horis in larario suo, in quo et divos principes, sed optimos, electos et animas sanctiores, in queis et Apollonium et quantum scriptor suorem temporum dicit, Christum Abraham et Orphœum rem divinam faciebat." (Lamprid., "In Heliog.," xliii.)

† "Christo templum facere voluit." (Ibid.)

ye would that they should do unto you," as to have them inscribed in letters of gold on his palace walls; but he could have had no conception of the real basis of the doctrines of Christ. He went no further than that syncretic paganism which found its true exponent in neo-platonism. Heliogabalus had raised to the throne of the world, the corrupt and cruel genius of Babylon and of Ephesus. Alexander Severus elevated to the same dignity the genius of Alexandria, with its mystical theosophy and comprehensive universalism, but also with its subtlety and powerlessness. Nevertheless this very universalism was propitious to the Church, which found in Alexander Severus a just protector. His mother Mammæa had some interviews with Origen. Alexander himself decided in favour of the Christians, in the case of a requisition, made without just cause, by some tavern-keepers at Rome, that a spacious house in which the Christians met for worship might be closed. This was a very marked indication of the toleration at this time enjoyed by them. The emperor declared that it was better that a god, be he who he might, should be worshipped in that house, than that it should fall into the hands of the tavern-keepers.* He thus recognised the existence of the Church.† He so much admired its constitution that he was desirous to introduce into the administration of the empire the mode of election used by the Church in the designation of its pastors. "He intended," says Lampridius, "to give governors, magistrates, or procurators to the provinces,

* "Rescripsit melius esse, ut quomodocunque illic Deus colatur, quam popinariis dedatur." (Lamprid., "In Heliog.," xlvii.)

† "Christianos esse passus est." (Ibid.)

and in order to ensure reasonable appointments to such offices, he proposed their names, challenging any charges which could be brought against them, and threatening death to calumniators. He said that it would be a serious reproach if Jews and Christians acted thus in the election of their priests, while no such form was observed in the case of the governors of provinces, to whom are entrusted the goods and the life of men."* But neither this admiration nor this toleration of the new religion conferred on it the freedom of the city, or gave to it a legal status in the empire. The decree of Trajan, far from being abrogated, was maintained, and the juris-consult Ulpian carefully recorded it in his book, "De Officio Proconsulis." †

Under the reign of the Syrian princes, the Church was greatly troubled by the Montanist dissensions, which caused much agitation in Italy and in Africa. We shall see that at this time the hierarchical system became consolidated at Rome, but not without calling forth severe struggles, of which the treatise of Hippolytus upon heresies, recently discovered, and falsely attributed to Origen, has preserved to us a memorial, vivid and pathetic almost to passion. The Gnostic tendency is no longer headed by such men as Valentine and Marcion. Theodotus and Cleomenes represent it at Rome, and find momentary countenance from some of the high dignitaries of the Church.

* "Dicebat grave esse cum id Christiani et Judæi facerent in prædicandis sacerdotibus, qui ordinandi sunt, non fieri in provinciarum rectoribus, quibus et fortunæ hominum committerentur et capita." (Lamprid., "In Heliog.," xlix.)

† Lactantius, "Institut.," V. xi. Neander, "Church History," Vol. I. p. 126. [Eng. Trans., Bohn's Edit., p. 174]

§ II. *The Church of the Empire, from Maximin the Thracian to Diocletian.*

Maximin the Thracian (235-238), the murderer and successor of Alexander Severus, was naturally inclined to visit with his enmity the favourites of his predecessor. He was a giant, predisposed to all deeds of violence, alike by his physical and mental constitution. His first act was to condemn to death several Christians, who had formed part of the household of Alexander. The persecution was aimed primarily at the bishops, whom the new emperor regarded as the chiefs of a hostile faction, attached by gratitude to the person of his victims.* Beyond this, the persecution was not of extraordinary violence. It was local, and therefore left open to the Christians the possibility of flight.† Special circumstances contributed to render it more cruel in Pontus and Cappadocia. Fearful earthquakes, swallowing up entire cities, had revived the fury of a fanatic people always inclined to impute such visitations to the new religion.‡ "We have seen," says Origen in his Commentary, written shortly after these events, "persecution breaking out afresh upon the Church in consequence of some earthquakes which spread great desolation, and which were attributed by the impious to

* Ὃς δὴ κατὰ κότον τὸν πρὸς τὸν Ἀλεξάνδρου οἶκον ἐκ πλειόνων πιστῶν συνεστῶτα, διωγμὸν ἐγείρας, τοὺς τῶν ἐκκλησιων ἄρχοντας μόνους, ἀναιρεῖσθαι προστάττει. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxviii.)

† "Erat transeundi facultas eo, quod persecutio illa non per totum mundum, sed localis fuisset." (Firmilianus, apud Cypriani. "Epistol.," Epist. lxxv.)

‡ "Ut per Cappadociam et per Pontum quædam etiam civitates in profundum receptæ dirupti soli hiatu devorarentur, ut ex hoc persecutio quoque gravis adversus nos Christiani nominis fieret." (Ibid.)

the Christians. Even those who appeared wise men joined in repeating this accusation in public.* It was at this same period that Origen wrote his "Exhortation to Martyrdom," † on the occasion of the imprisonment of his friend Ambrosius and of the priest Protoctetus. This treatise was no doubt designed to be read in all the prisons where the Christians were confined. Such manly counsels were in truth needed, for the moral enervation, to which we have already alluded in speaking of the persecution under Severus, had become yet more prevalent in the Church during a time of repose and even of favour, which had drawn into its bosom many adherents of doubtful constancy. The crucible of trial, which was once again to be held over the heated furnace, would act as a salutary purifier and refiner. But even faithful Christians had not breathed with impunity the tainted air of indifference. They, too, needed to be sharply warned, and Origen's treatise was for them a thrilling reminder of the ancient heroism of the Church. We shall not enlarge here on its special tenets; these we reserve for our exposition of his theology. We shall only now advert to that which was intended to brace the hearts of the Christian captives. Origen commences with general reflections on the shortness of the sufferings of the present life compared with the glory to come, and on the blessedness of a speedy death, which, delivering us from the body, removes from before our eyes the heavy veil which hides

* Origen, "Commentary on Matthew," Vol. XXVIII. (Delarue Edit., Vol. III. p. 859.)

† Redepenning, "Origines," Vol. II. p. 15.

from us the vision of God.* He then sets forth the superiority of martyrdom over all other forms of death. While other men are often found willing to suffer for a particular virtue, such as sobriety, wisdom, justice, the Christian dies for nothing less than God Himself.† How carefully then must Christians be on their guard against any sort of abjuration, even should it present itself in the most modified form. Apostasy is the worst description of adultery, for it severs the soul from the heavenly Bridegroom, who loves it with holy jealousy,‡ and joins it to him for whom the faith of Christ is abjured. The alliance contracted between the soul and God, rests on certain conditions, which are summed up in complete devotedness to Christ.§ "Our self-renunciation should go so far that we may be able to say, 'It is no more I that live.' Then we shall have truly taken up our cross to follow Christ; and thus it will be, if He indeed lives in us. Those who are favoured with this world's goods, as was Abraham, will find in their riches the means of offering to God a more complete sacrifice, to be compensated to them a hundredfold by that which He has in reserve for them. Just as those who have passed through torture, and manifold suffering, and pains, have shown in martyrdom more special and signal virtue, than those who have experienced no such trials; so those who have broken the bonds of ease and self-indulgence, being moved by a great love for the God from whom they have received the sharp and two-

* "Ad Martyr.," ii.

† Περὶ τῆς εὐσεβείας μόνον τὸ ἐκκλεκτὸν ἀγωνίζεται γένος. (Ibid., v.)

‡ Φησὶ πρὸς τὴν νύμφην ψυχὴν θεὸς εἶναι ζηλωτης. (Ibid., ix.)

§ Ibid., xii.

edged sword of the immortal word, have, by this very renunciation, taken unto themselves eagles' wings on which to mount to the house of their Lord."* In setting forth the glories of martyrdom, Origen rises to an eloquence which reminds us of Tertullian, without, however, losing that higher power of thought by which he is ever distinguished. We have already quoted the noble passage in which he represents all heaven attentive to the conflict of the humble confessor, often scarcely noted upon earth. He depicts in glowing colours the heroism of the great servants of God under the old covenant, and in particular that of the Maccabees, whose courageous mother he sets before us, calm and intrepid in view of their suffering, because, in her own poetical words, the dew of piety quenched within her the ardent flame of a mother's grief.† The example of the Divine sufferer is finally held forth to His fainting disciples. Let them never, in the midst of sorrow and reproach, lose sight of the triumph which awaits them! "Let us not marvel, if before attaining to that blessedness, to that untroubled peace and calm, we should have to pass through a rough, wintry storm. When the winter is over, when its showers have fallen, the flowers will appear, and the righteous shall flourish, planted in the house of their God.‡ The hatred of the world gives no ground for surprise; none who have not passed from death unto life can love those who have attained to this divine life,

* Κατασκευάσαντες ἑαυτοῖς πτέρυγας ὥσπερ ἀετός ἐπιστρέψαι εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ προεστηκότος ἑαυτῶν. ("Ad Martyr.," xv.)

† Δρὺσοι εὐσεβείας τὸ πνεῦμα ὁσιότητος οὐκ εἴων ἀναπτεσθαι ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις τὸ μητρικὸν πῦρ. (Ibid., xxvii.)

‡ Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παρελθεῖν τὸν χειμῶνα, τὰ ἄνθη οφθησεται. (Ibid., xxxi.)

and who, from the dark abode of the dead, have been brought into the habitations of light, where God dwells.* The day of the Christian's triumph has already risen upon us, † for by our glorious sufferings, endured with Christ, we tread under our feet principalities and powers. Let us show greatness of soul in all that befalls us." After some lengthened dissertations on demons, and on the purifying virtue of martyrdom, Origen returns to the main current of thought in his book with these words: "We have heard the words of Jesus Christ, and we have long embraced the Gospel. The present conflict will show what is our foundation—whether we have built upon the solid rock or on the unstable sand; for lo! the tempest is coming upon us, the rain and the wind and the floods. Either our house will stand unshaken, because built upon the rock, which is Jesus Christ, or its fall will prove its unsoundness. God preserve our building! for apostasy is a fearful downfall, and as St. Luke says, 'The ruin of that house is great.' Let us then ask God that we may be like the wise man who built his house upon the rock. Let the evil spirits which are abroad in the air, let the authorities and powers of the world, storm like a deluge against a house thus built; let the fierce winds of the powers of this generation blow upon it; let hell itself dash against the rock which supports such a building, and they will give less convincing proof of their own violence, than of the firmness of our house, which cannot be shaken." ‡

* "Ad Martyr.," xli.

† *Ἐνέστη ἡμῖν καιρὸς χριστιανῶν καυχησεων.* (Ibid.)

‡ *"Ινα μὴ μόνον πρὸς τὸ μὴ πεσεῖν, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ σαλευθῆναι τὴν ἀρχην οἰκίαν.* (Ibid., xlviii.)

Origen and his contemporaries were destined to witness the bursting of a more terrible storm upon the Church than the persecutions of Maximin, who fell in a tumult under the walls of Aquileia. There were a few intervening days of calm under the reign of Philip the Arabian. This emperor had dyed his purple robe in the blood of the young Gordianus, who had been for a brief instant saluted emperor after the violent death of his father and grandfather, and in consequence of the murder of Maximin and of Balbinus, whom the same senate had appointed successors to the first Gordians (A.D. 244.) Philip the Arabian was favourable to the Christians, for the same reason which had induced Maximin the Thracian to persecute them; he was tolerant out of hatred to his predecessor. This was not enough, however, to make him a Christian. We cannot, therefore, attach any credibility to the story of his conversion, even though Eusebius relates (without, however, pledging himself to its truth) a very ancient legend, representing the emperor as standing knocking at the door of the Church, and as being, for his crimes, sent back into the ranks of the penitents, by the bishop to whom he addressed himself. * Though he was in communication with Origen, and received a letter from him, it is certain that he never embraced Origen's faith. It would be impossible to reconcile with his admission into the Church, the solemn celebration of the millennarian games which took place in his reign in honour of the foundation of Rome (A.D. 247), and which was

* Eusebius only says: Ὁ λόγος κατέχει. See a very clear discussion of the question of Philip's conversion in Mosheim, "Commentar. De rebus ante Constant.," p. 472.

necessarily accompanied with many pagan ceremonials. Splendid as were these games and spectacles, they could not disguise the internal decay of a tottering empire, which knew no law but that of force and brute violence. Foreign invasion was perpetually threatening its borders, and fire and sword had failed to extinguish the religion, which was to triumph over the ruins of ancient Rome. It was sinking under the weight of those thousand years of paganism of which it so proudly boasted. Philip the Arabian was succeeded by the senator Decius Trajan, who, being entrusted by him with a large armed force, raised the standard of revolt, and defeated Philip at Verona. Decius, as emperor, made one more effort to re-establish the shaken and tottering empire. He embraced the policy of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, and of this policy, persecution was one of the leading features. It would now naturally be carried on on a yet wider scale, on account of the progress made by Christianity, and of the growing disregard of human life, which was the result of the repeated sanguinary crises through which the empire had passed. The Church was not unprepared for the terrible trial awaiting her. Origen, in his book, "Contra Celsum," written in the reign of Philip the Arabian, recognises the fact that the respite enjoyed by the Christians could be but momentary, and that it would terminate as soon as their enemies had once more impressed on the popular mind, the idea that the troubles of the empire were due to the tolerance of the proconsuls. "I do not believe," he said, "that the tranquillity we are now enjoying will be of long duration."* Cyprian, Bishop

* Origen, "Contra Celsum," III. cxv. (Vol. I. p. 456.)

of Carthage, had seen in prophetic vision the coming persecution. "I saw," he writes, "the father of a family, and by his side a young man whose countenance expressed anxiety and grief blended with indignation; his cheek was resting upon his hand. Another young man on the left was holding a net, which he seemed to wish to cast over a whole great nation. It was said to him whom this vision astonished, that the young man on the right was mourning to see his precepts violated, while he on the left rejoiced at having obtained from the father of the family permission to act with cruelty."* It is not needful to have recourse to a miraculous intervention in order to explain this vision; it reproduced in a symbolic form the prevailing feelings of earnest Christians at this time. They were constrained to admit that the level of piety was sensibly lowered, that the spirit of the world had crept into the Church, with the multitudes whom a prolonged peace had tempted to enter its ranks, and that finally the love of ease and of pleasure, the desire for repose and the shrinking from suffering, were preparing the way for numerous defections. At Alexandria, as at Rome and at Carthage, eloquent voices were deploring this melancholy condition of the Church, into the causes of which we shall have carefully to inquire. It was especially in the great cities that this decline of the Christian life was observable; there, temptations were many, and apart from the seductions of pagan life, the Church, enriched and

* "Dictum est ei juvenem qui ad dextram sic sederet, contristari et dolere quod præcepta sua non observarentur; illum vero in sinistra exultare, quod sibi daretur occasio ut a patrefamilias potestatem sumeret sæviendi." (Cyprian, "Epist." xi. 4.)

dignified in worldly estimation by the addition of many families belonging to the higher classes of society, itself spread more than one snare for pride and ambition. * Those who grieved over such a state of things were fain to desire the sharp discipline of persecution, and from day to day they expected its outbreak. A year before the cruel edict of Decius, persecution had burst forth at Alexandria in consequence of a popular tumult stirred up by a licentious poet, who was accustomed to gain a living by his pagan verses, as the silversmiths of Ephesus did by the sale of images of Diana. This persecution was not legalised and formal; it was a sudden violent rising, and the Christians who perished in it were put to death without trial. Old men and women were basely murdered, after having been subjected to such frightful tortures as an incensed and ruthless mob can invent. Metras, a very aged man, and Quinta, a feeble woman, stood firm under all threats and suffering. Quinta, after being taken into a pagan temple, was dragged through the streets of Alexandria till her body was torn to pieces by the sharp stones. A young girl named Apollonia stood steadfast in view of the stake kindled to consume her, and cast herself into the flames after her tormentors had torn out all her teeth. The crowd forcibly entered the houses of the Christians, carrying cruelty and rapine wherever they went. † Hardly was the fury of the Alexandrians appeased, when persecution burst forth afresh through the whole empire, under the decree

* See Origen, "In Johann.," Homily VII. Cyprian, "De Lapsis," v. These two important passages will be carefully examined by us in our representation of the Christian life.

† Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xli.

of the emperor himself. This time no province was exempt. In the preceding persecution, the attack had been directed primarily against bishops; in this, no distinction was recognised either of place or class. One threat was suspended over all heads. A veritable Inquisition was instituted, for the decree of Decius contained a terrible aggravation of that of Trajan. It no longer enjoined simply the condemnation to death of men convicted of having embraced the new religion; it commanded that they should, if possible, be forced by tortures to recant. Such an innovation gave unlimited scope to the sanguinary genius of the persecutors, and rendered the trial of the Christians tenfold more severe. "The emperor," we read in the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, by Gregory of Nyssa, "commanded the governors of the various provinces, under terrible threats in case of disobedience, to inflict upon the Christians all manner of tortures, in order to bring them back to the national worship of demons, by fear and by the excess of their agony." * We know what manner of men they were to whom this decree was sent, and with what cruel eagerness it would be executed. Thus the Church found itself called to pass through an ordeal of exceptional severity, and to endure such a persecution as nothing in her past history could parallel. "The times are come," said Origen, "of which the Lord spoke when He declared that the elect themselves should

* Πεμπει πρὸς τοὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν καθηγουμένους πρόσταγμα, φοβερὰν κατ' αὐτῶν τὴν ἀπειλὴν τῆς τιμωρίας ὁρίζων, εἰ μὴ παντοίοις αἰκισμοῖς τοὺς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ χριστοῦ προσκυνοῦντας διαλωβήσαιντο και προσαγάγο πιενάλιν αὐτοὺς ψόβῳ τε καὶ τῇ τῶν αἰκισμῶν ἀναγκῇ τῇ τῶν δαιμόνων λατρείᾳ. (Greg. Nyssensis in "Vita Gregor. Thaumat.," Vol. III. p. 567; Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. 1.)

hardly be saved." He was not mistaken, for terrible fallings away were soon witnessed. The decree was immediately promulgated, and affixed in all public places. A day was named, after which all who had not sacrificed to the gods would be put to the torture. Terror reigned among the Christians, and many were seen anticipating the utmost limit of grace allotted them, and performing the deed of apostasy with a precipitation which betrayed at once the agitation of their conscience and their cowardly alarm. The apostates belonged chiefly to the higher classes of society. "Men remembered then," says Dionysius of Alexandria, "that which the Saviour had said about the difficulty of a rich man's entering into the kingdom of heaven."* Sometimes the apostasy was open, and sealed by a public sacrifice to the false gods; sometimes it was more furtive, as though the deserter still hoped by some bye-way to secure the blessings of the faithful. Many timorous Christians did not sacrifice to the idols, but asked and obtained of the magistrates a certificate of their idolatry, or simply the inscription of their name in the list of the recusants, which sufficed to place them in safety.†

Thus arose the very grave question of the re-admission into the Church of those who in time of temptation had fallen away; we shall see, as we proceed, how deeply this question agitated the Church. It was the occasion

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xli.

† Hence the distinction into *thurificati* and *libellatici*, of which we have already spoken. (Cyprian, "Epist." xl.) Those who got their names inscribed on the apostate list were designated as *Acta Facientes*. (Cyprian, "Epist." xxxi.)

of the important Councils of Carthage, of Rome, and of Africa (A.D. 251), in which the influence of Cyprian so powerfully asserted itself.* He wept bitter tears over these lamentable defections, and in his judgment on them, carefully avoided the two extremes of too great severity and culpable laxity. He wrote to the people of Carthage: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with him. I suffer, I groan over our brethren who have fallen and yielded to the assaults of persecution. They have torn our very bowels, and we bleed from their wounds."† If the decree of Decius had encountered only such coward spirits, it would have attained its end, and Christianity would have been extirpated in the empire. But the old heroism was again manifested, as in the noblest days of the first two centuries.

There were some Christians who showed themselves ready to forsake all for Jesus Christ, and condemned themselves to voluntary exile. Some bishops, like Cyprian and Dionysius of Alexandria, were their example in this. Others in great numbers were cast into gloomy dungeons, where they endured every kind of privation. The magistrates, scrupulously docile in carrying out the commands of the emperor, tried by a thousand tortures to overcome their resistance, but in vain. "You have endured," wrote Cyprian to the confessors of Carthage, "steadfast unto the end, under the most terrible trials. You have succumbed under no tortures, but tortures

* A full account of all this will be given in that portion of our book which will treat of the ecclesiastical organisation of the early centuries.

† "Partem nostrorum viscerum secum trahentes, parem dolorem nobis suis vulneribus intulerunt." (Cyprian, "Epist." xvii. 1.)

have been made to succumb under your constancy."* If we are constrained to admit that there was a certain tendency to pride manifest at this time among the martyrs, which led them more than once to abuse their influence and to trouble the Church, it is nevertheless due to them to own, that they saved the Church's honour by rallying a select company of faithful souls around the blood-stained banner, which so many apostates had deserted. The sufferings endured by them appear to have been terrible indeed. Cyprian speaks of their limbs being broken and torn again and again by claws of iron.† Nothing but death came to the relief of the sufferers. Sometimes an attempt would be made to seduce into sensuality and sin, those who could not be subdued by tortures or the threat of death. St. Jerome relates that one young man was taken to the abode of a harlot, where every snare of the senses was spread before him. He resisted the enticements of sinful pleasure as courageously as he had borne the infliction of suffering, and came out unscathed from this fiery ordeal.‡

As we have already said, this persecution extended over the whole empire, from east to west. At Rome one of the first victims was the Bishop Fabianus, who had been raised to the episcopal dignity by a sudden inspiration of the people.§ After him no immediate successor was appointed, for fear of exasperating the persecutors. "An uncertain rumour," wrote Cyprian to the clergy of

* "Nec cessistis suppliciis, sed vobis potius supplicia cesserunt." (Cyprian, "Epist." x. 2.)

† "Steterunt torti torquentibus fortiores quamvis torquerentur jam non membra sed vulnera." (Ibid.)

‡ Hieronymus, "Vita Pauli." § Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxi.

Rome, "had reached me of the death of this excellent man, my colleague; I scarcely knew whether to believe it or not. Your letters have fully assured me of his glorious end. I rejoice in the illustrious testimony you bear to his memory. You have for the one part desired to let us know how precious to you is the memory of your bishop, and for the other part to communicate to us the example of faith and courage thus set before us. For just as there is reason to fear that the defection of a bishop may lead away others after him, so is the steadfastness and faith of a bishop a useful and salutary example to the flock."* In the East, the Bishops Alexander of Jerusalem and Babylas of Antioch died in prison; the former probably sank under the tortures inflicted on him,† the latter was beheaded. Six young persons, his catechumens, had been sentenced with Babylas. After seeing them perish before his eyes, he laid down his own venerable head upon the block before the executioner, saying: "Here am I, O God, and the children whom Thou hast given me!" His chains were buried with him by his own desire, "to show," said Chrysostom, "that that which the world despises is the glory of the Christian." Thus he willingly laid down his life, rather than quit the post in the battle-field where his Master had placed him.‡

* "In tantum contra utile et salutare, cum se episcopus per firmamentum fidei fratribus præbet imitandum." (Cyprian, "Epist." ix. 1)

† Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxxix.

‡ The acts of this martyr may be read in Ruinart. There is an evident basis of truth in the narrative, overlaid as it is with subsequent alterations. (See "Die Heldenzeiten des Christenthums," by Kretzler, p. 241.)

Persecution was no less severe at Ephesus; the legend of the Seven Sleepers bears clear traces of the terror which constrained the Christians of that region to seek concealment in the very bowels of the earth. At Smyrna, the martyrdom of St. Pionius and his companions wiped away a great reproach from the Church. Eudemon, the Bishop of the Church in that city, had openly apostatised. Pionius was celebrating the Eucharistic repast with a few Christians, when he was surprised by an excited mob, and dragged into the public square. His replies to the questions put to him were calm and steadfast. When asked if life was not sweet to him—a very natural question under the beautiful sky of Asia Minor, and in the enchanting district of ancient Ionia—he replied that it would be sweet to him to breathe the air and to behold the light of the land to which his heart aspired. The most bitter cup he was made to drink was to be present at the apostasy of his bishop, and to hear the lips, which had so often uttered the words of divine truth, now deny the Lord Christ. This spectacle, so far from shaking the constancy of Pionius, inflamed him with a holy jealousy, and neither the exceptional severities of his imprisonment, nor the sufferings of the stake, could wring from him anything but a fearless confession of Christ and Him crucified.

At Alexandria and at Carthage the persecution reached its height. Dionysius and Cyprian have left us a vivid picture of it. The consternation was great in the first of these cities when the decree of Decius was read, and when the soldiers were seen scouring the streets and the surrounding country that they

might lay hands on the Bishop. All who could flee, abandoned home and country. Many of the fugitives died of hunger, thirst, and cold, upon the mountains and in the deserts; others were slain by robbers or by wild beasts.* Defections were many. The fury of the people fell with all the more intensity upon those Christians who stood firm as "the pillars of the Church." Tortures—strange, ridiculous, and sanguinary—were heaped upon them. Some of the prisoners were in derision mounted upon mules and scourged through the town before being led to the stake. The tenderest youth was not spared, children only fifteen years old were tortured and put to death. More than once, faithful confessors came forth from the ranks of the executioners. A very touching scene took place at the examination of one of the Christians of the city. He was almost ready to fail and yield as the last agony drew near, when some of the soldiers of the proconsular guard made a sign to him to stand fast. . . . They were themselves at once involved in the same condemnation, and went triumphantly to death.†

At Carthage the persecution, which had been at first moderate, owing to the absence of the proconsul, became ruthless on his return. The same scenes ensued which we have described at Alexandria. Numerous apostasies, the precipitate flight of all who could quit the city, the prolonged and diversified tortures of the confessors and their bloody death,—such were the effects

* Τί δεῖ λέγειν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἐν ἐρημίαις ὄρεσι πλανηθέντων, ὑπὸ λιμοῦ καὶ δίψης καὶ κρύους καὶ νόσων καὶ ληστῶν, καὶ θηρίων διεφθαρμένων. (Letter of Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xlii.)

† Ibid., xli.

of the fresh outburst of the storm. Imprisonment was accompanied with unwonted rigours: the feet were made fast with iron fetters, the body bound with chains, and the captives endured all the agonies of hunger and thirst.* Here, also, much noble heroism was displayed. Cyprian had conferred the sacerdotal office on a Christian named Numidicus, who, after giving an earnest exhortation from the place of execution to his fellow-martyrs, among whom was his own wife, was left for dead with the rest of the corpses.† His daughter, who went to seek his body to bury it, found him still living, and under her tender care he was restored. Cyprian celebrated the courage of the martyrs in terms as eloquent as Tertullian, but in a less abrupt and telling form. With the wise counsels which he gave to the confessors, he blended exalted eulogiums, which had a tendency to make the martyrs regard themselves as exceptions to all common rules, and as raised above the ordinary discipline of the Church, so that they began to fancy they held in their bleeding hands the keys of pardon. He is never weary of extolling their courage. He describes them as rising higher and higher in glory the more slow and protracted are their sufferings. "With what words shall I sound your praises," he exclaims, "O heroic brethren! The crowd of witnesses have beheld with admiration your spiritual conflict for the Lord; they have heard you, His servants, confess His name openly before men, with in-

* "Caro famis ac sitis diuturnitate contabuit," says Cyprian, of Celerius, whom he desired to raise to the office of reader.

† "Qui uxorem adherentem latere suo concrematam lætus adspexit. Ipse semiustulatus et lapidibus obrutus et pro mortuus derelictus." (Cyprian, "Epist." xl.)

corruptible faith and divine courage; they have beheld you unarmed against the darts of the world, but covered all the while with the shield of faith. The blood, which was to quench the thirst of the persecutors, flowed in floods,—glorious blood extinguishing the flames of Gehenna. O what a spectacle for God Himself! How sublime, how grand! With what joy has not Christ fought and conquered in those who are His! He gives to them all that which He seems to take from them.* He is present in the conflict, supporting, strengthening, animating the champions of His name. He who for us overcame death, ceases not to triumph over it in us.† Happy is our Church, illumined with so divine a glory, and ennobled in our day by the blood of the martyrs! She was before white with the purity of her children, now she has found a royal robe of purple in their blood."‡ Such language shows us that Cyprian was himself carried away by the current he tries to stem. We shall see how martyrdom, though it originated in the refusal to sacrifice to idols, gradually introduced into the Church, through the undue exaltation of the confessors, a new idolatry, full of peril to true doctrine and right discipline.

Decius fell in a great battle with the invading Goths. Gallus (A.D. 251-263), one of the chiefs of the army, succeeded him, and hastened to purchase an ignominious peace from the barbarians. His reign, inaugurated by so

* "Dans credentibus quantum se credit capere qui sumit." (Cyprian, "Epist." x. 3.)

† "Et qui pro nobis mortem semet vicit, semper vincit in nobis." (Ibid.)

‡ "Erat ante in operibus fratrum candida, nunc facta est in martyrum cruore purpurea." (Ibid., x. 6.)

unworthy an act, was marked by frequent invasions, in addition to which the empire suffered from decimating epidemics. Once more arose the cry, "The Christians to the lions!" The flames that had scarcely yet ceased to smoulder were rekindled, especially in the large towns. Once more the Church was made to answer for all the woes with which the world was visited, and this accusation was none the less dangerous because it was now two centuries old.*

The emperor, in order doubtless to divert from himself the public indignation, which he was conscious he had but too well merited, decreed a fresh persecution in the year 252.† The Christians now reaped the fruits of their late discipline; their faith, purified in the burning crucible, and strengthened by the sufferings of the preceding reign, failed not. We read no more in the writings of the time of sorrowful defections, such as stained the persecution under Decius. "How many Christians who had fallen," writes Cyprian, "have been raised again by a glorious confession! They have stood firm, exhibiting such strength from the depth of their repentance, that it was evident they had been surprised into their former weakness, and had only quailed through the strangeness of persecution. Having now returned to the true faith, and gathered up their strength, they are ready, in the name of God, to endure all suffering with constancy and courage. They have no longer to seek pardon for a fault, but may reach forth unto the

* "Dixisti per nos fieri et quod nobis debeant imputari omnia ista, quibus nunc mundus quatitur et urgetur, quod dii vestri a nobis non colantur." (Cyprian, "Ad Demetr.," iii.)

† Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. i.

crown of martyrdom."* The Church of Rome appears to have been the first to suffer. Two of its bishops perished in this persecution: these were Cornelius and Lucius. The mode of Cornelius' death is not known; Lucius was beheaded. We possess a letter from the Bishop of Carthage, who nobly congratulates Cornelius on his fidelity. "I cannot express to thee," wrote Cyprian to him, "my rapture and joy when I received the good tidings of thy constancy. Thou hast taken thy place at the head of the band of confessors, and the courage of the bishop has been upheld by the courage of those who trod in his footsteps. Thyself leading the way to glory, thou hast turned the feet of many into the same path; thou hast persuaded thy whole flock as one man to confess the truth,† because thou wast thyself ready to confess the Master in the name of all. The adversary thought to scatter the camp of Christ in confusion by his sudden assault, but he has met with a zeal in the defence equal to his own in the attack."‡ Cyprian, writing to Lucius, the successor of Cornelius, who with a number of the Roman Christians had just passed through the furnace without being consumed, expresses, in the most touching manner, the joy which must be felt in beholding again such noble confessors, who, like the three young Hebrews in Babylon,§ had been miraculously delivered from the power of death: "Would to God that I could be present at your return into the Church! What must be the delight of the brethren!

* "Quot illic lapsi gloriosa confessione sunt restituti." (Cyprian, "Epist." ix. 2.)

† "Confessorem populum suaseris esse." (Cyprian, "Epist." lx. 1.)

‡ "Quo impetu venerat, eodem impetu pulsus et victus est." (Ibid., lx. 2.)

§ Ibid., lxi. 1.

What their warm welcome and eager embraces! But scarcely can even such embraces, or the beaming eyes and sunny faces of the flock, express the deep joy they feel in looking on you once again! It is a feast of which they are never weary. Brethren, you can faintly foreshadow what will be the joy when Christ Himself returns. That return is near, and you are enjoying its image and foretaste; for it seems as if the Lord Himself were come again with this noble confessor, His bishop and His priest."* This joy was, alas! of short duration, for Lucius was soon again seized, and this time his life was the sacrifice.

Persecution was sure to fall heavily upon the Christians of Carthage, since the pestilence, which had so exasperated the populace against them, had been most virulent in that city. Cyprian has left us a pathetic picture of this fearful epidemic, which everywhere carried terror and death in its track. The malady attacked the whole body at once; the sufferer wasted away, his throat burned as with a hidden fire, his eyes grew dim and bloodshot, and a gnawing agony consumed his vitals.† There was scarcely a house exempt. Cyprian had a double duty to fulfil: he had first to silence the calumnies of the pagans, who accused the Christians of being the authors of their woes; then to reassure the Christians themselves, whom this fearful scourge terrified beyond measure. He nobly acquitted himself of his arduous task. He wrote for the pagans the letter

* "Quæ illic exsultatio omnium fratrum, qui concursus atque complexus occurrentium singulorum." (Cyprian Epist., lxi. 3.)

† "In faucium vulnera conceptus medullitus ignis exæstuat, oculi vi sanguinis inardescunt." (Cyprian, "De Mortalitate," xiv.)

to Demetrius, one of the agitators for the persecution and one of the most bitter slanderers of the Church. To his flock he addressed his treatise "On Mortality."

The eloquent Bishop did not disguise from himself the difficulty of bringing to reason a pagan people, whose passions were excited. "As well," he said, "try to calm with a word, the sea seething in the tempest."* Nevertheless, he felt it incumbent on him seriously to refute calumnies, which were equally baseless and absurd. He expresses, first of all, an idea which might readily arise in the age of social disorganisation in which he lived. It seems to him that the world has grown old,† that, in a world weary of life-bearing, death alone germinates readily. Looking on that vast empire, a prey to its own internal decay and to the rapacious quarrels of its rulers, he instinctively feels the end of the world must be at hand. He could not know that those barbarians, who were in his eyes the heralds of general ruin, were in truth to be the renovators of the world, and to open to humanity a career of renewed youth and fresh development. Cyprian has also other and stronger arguments to use against his adversaries. It is not the pretended impiety of the Christians, it is the crimes of the pagans which have irritated Heaven. "These calamities," he says, "come not because we do not worship your gods, but because you do not worship ours."‡ He quotes, in support of

* "Turbulenti maris concitos fluctus clamoribus retundere." (Cyprian, "Ad Demetr.," iii.) † "Senuisse jam mundum." (Ibid.)

‡ "Non enim ista accedunt, quod dii vestri a nobis non coluntur, sed quod a vobis non colatur Deus." (Ibid., v.)

this assertion, the most terrible denunciations of idolatry contained in the Scriptures. "God is angry, and menaces and visits you, because you do not come back to Him. And in your blind obstinacy and disregard of Him, you marvel and complain that the heavens give no rain, that the earth is consumed with drought, that the barren soil brings forth only a thin and withered herbage, that the hail smites the vines and the wind strips the olive-trees, that a mortal poison is abroad in the air, when all these judgments are provoked by your sins,* and when the anger of God waxes hotter and hotter, so long as you continue in them." Cyprian then gives a picture of the crimes of the pagans, for which strong colours were ready to his hand. "You complain of the enemies without; what are they in comparison with the enemies within, with those of our fellow-citizens who are powerful only for evil? You complain of famine, as if rapacity did not bring more want upon our cities than the drought brings.† You complain of the pestilence, but you add to its horrors by your inhumanity, abandoning the poor sufferers, and allowing their bodies to lie unburied." All these crimes culminate in the treatment to which the Christians are subjected. "Not content with not worshipping God yourselves, you sacrilegiously persecute those who do worship Him. Full of complaisance for the devotees of what I may call not only senseless idols but monsters, you lay a ban only upon the followers of the true God. These innocent men, dear to their God and

* "Cum omnia ista, provocantibus peccatis vestris, veniunt." (Cyprian, "Ad Demetr.," vii.)

† "Quasi famem majorem siccitas quam rapacitas faciat."(Ibid.,v.)

honourable among yourselves, you banish; you confiscate their goods, you load them with fetters, you cast them into dungeons, you behead them, you throw them to the wild beasts, or give their bodies to be burnt. Nay, more, each day a subtle cruelty devises some new mode of torture.* Do you marvel that God should avenge His own?† He makes them, for their profit, partakers in the common affliction which comes upon all men, but to you these scourges declare the terrible judgment of God upon your crimes." The treatise concludes with an eloquent appeal, addressed to the conscience of the pagans, which follows on a description, written in letters of fire, of the pains of the future life. "To hate is forbidden us," said Cyprian; "we please God by not avenging ourselves; therefore we summon you to obey God, and to rise from your deep darkness into the pure light of true religion. We render you love for hatred, and our only vengeance for the tortures which you lay upon us is to show unto you the way of salvation. Believe and live."‡

Cyprian was not less earnest in his endeavours to rally the failing courage of the Christians of Carthage. "I observe," he says, in his treatise "On Mortality," "that some among you, through feebleness of soul or poverty of faith, through a cowardly clinging to the present life or through the natural weakness of your

* "Excogibat novas pænas ingeniosa crudelitas." (Cyprian, "Ad Demetr.," xii.)

† "Quod inultum non remaneat quodcunque perpatimur." (Ibid., xvii.)

‡ "Odisse non licet nobis. Odiis vestris benevolentiam reddimus, et pro tormentis ac suppliciis, quæ nobis inferuntur, salutis itinera monstramus." (Ibid., xxv.)

sex, or, which is a more serious peril, through erroneous views, faint in the day of trial."* He seeks to forewarn these timid Christians against the fear of death, by pointing out to them all the temptations and sufferings, with which we are surrounded in this world of sin. "Our joy will be to see the Lord Christ. What blindness and folly to choose, rather than that beatific vision, the tribulations, pains and sorrows of the world. This comes, beloved brethren, from our want of faith."† Cyprian then enumerates from Scripture the benefits of trial. "Why fear a death which is a deliverance from the present age? Do not imagine, because the just die as the unjust, that their end is the same. The just are taken away to the abode of blessedness, the unjust to the place of torment. We are ungrateful, O brethren beloved, for the benefits bestowed upon us. Behold our virgins, who fall asleep in peace with their glory undefiled; they have no more to fear the violence or the seductions of Antichrist, who is at hand, nor can they be drawn into the haunts of infamy. Our children escape the perils of the age of guilty desires, and lightly wear the crown of continence and innocence. The delicate matron has no more to fear the tortures of persecution; she is delivered by swift death from the barbarous hands of the executioners. The present trial is to revive the heart of the fearful, to fortify the weak, to stir up the slothful, to rally the deserters, and to equip for the fight a new and numerous army, prepared to stand in the fore-front of the battle when it shall

* "Animadverto quosdam minus stare fortiter." (Cyprian, "De Mortalitate," i.)

† "Hoc fit quia fides deest." (Ibid., vi.)

recommence.* Let us not murmur as though the epidemic snatched away the martyr's crown: those are not held faithless to the martyr's calling to whom the occasion of martyrdom never comes.† That which is essential, is that we do the will of God." These counsels produced the desired result; the assembled Church listened to them from the lips of the Bishop himself. The effect of his discourse was irresistible, and the deacon Pontius, the biographer of Cyprian, exclaims that had the pagans been present they would certainly have been won to Christ. All cowardly fear was banished from the hearts of the Christians; they devoted themselves zealously to the tending of the sick and the burial of the dead. Offerings abounded, and the charity of the Church was extended even to the pagans. "Thus," adds Pontius, "did it cast into the shade that of Tobias, who distributed his alms only to the poor of his own people."‡

Almost at the same time, the savage nations of Northern Africa having carried off into their deserts many captives, among whom were some Christians, Cyprian made a fresh appeal to the liberality of his Church in his treatise "On Almsgiving." We find in this treatise unquestionably more than one false idea of the expiatory and purifying virtue of generous giving; but the duty of generosity is urged with passionate eloquence. The pious Bishop said with reason that Christians should dread rather to find their charity

* Cyprian, "De Mortalitate," xv.

† "Aliud est martyrio animum deesse, aliud anim odefuisse martyrium." (Ibid., xvii.)

‡ Pontius, "Vita et Passio." Cyprian. Kretzler, "Die Heldenzeiten des Christenthums."

diminishing than their goods growing less.* There is more prudence in leaving God as the guardian of our children, than in labouring to increase their patrimony. Cyprian sustains this argument, which breathes the purest spirit of the Gospel, by drawing a striking parallel between the generosity of men of the world for the prince of this world, and the parsimony of Christians towards their God. He supposes the Evil One coming with his followers to the Church and thus addressing it: "I have not borne for these, my friends, shameful entreating and scourging; I have not been crucified nor shed my blood for them, nor have I promised them the kingdom of heaven. Yet see what precious gifts they bring me to adorn my feasts, whether the offering be of their goods or of their own selves. Hast thou, O Christ, such givers among Thy rich ones? Do they bring such offerings to Thee, pledging or sacrificing their worldly goods, nay, rather exchanging them for durable riches in that Church which Thou dost watch and govern? These fading, earthly treasures that are lavished on me, give not food, comfort, or clothing to any creature. Thou, on the contrary, art clothed and cherished in the persons of Thy poor, and Thou dost promise eternal life to the charitable among Thy friends; and yet these, to whom is held forth such a celestial recompense, come short in munificence of those who are ready to perish in my train."† Such appeals could not be withstood, and the captives were ransomed.

Gallus was murdered with his son, as he was march-

* "Dum ne quid de rebus tuis minuatur attendis, non respicis quod ipse minuaris." ("De opere et eleemos.," x.)

† "Tuos tales munerarios, Christe, demonstra. Vix tui meis pereuntibus adæquantur." (Ibid., xxii.)

ing against his competitor Æmilianus; the latter met the same fate, and Valerian, who was hastening from the Rhine to assist Gallus, was proclaimed emperor (A.D. 253), while his son Gallienus was associated with him in the empire by the senate. He at first appeared favourably disposed to the new religion, so that his palace was filled with Christians, and, Eusebius says, resembled a Church.* Too soon, however, there came a change. The emperor fell under the influence of Macrinus, an able man, versed in the magic of Egypt. Soldiers of fortune, raised to the throne by crime, were ever accessible to those superstitions which seemed to promise all the advantages of religion, while tolerating and favouring every vice. It was an easy mode of procuring the protection, or to speak more truly, the complicity, of the occult divinities, who were esteemed the more powerful the less they were understood. Valerian decreed a new persecution under the influence of Macrinus. It was not at first very sanguinary. We see, from the account given by Dionysius of Alexandria, that the proconsuls contented themselves with forbidding meetings for worship, and sentencing the delinquents to exile. In proconsular Africa, the Christians were prohibited visiting the cemeteries, and many of them were compelled to work in the mines. Cyprian wrote to these a letter of consolation, which gives us some idea of their pitiable condition. They had been scourged before being sent to their rude labours; they were bound in chains, and their feet loaded with irons. "These are not chains," exclaims Cyprian, "they are ornaments. O fettered feet of the blessed ones, treading the path to

† Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. x.

paradise! You have no bed, no place of rest in the mines; your wearied limbs are stretched on the cold earth; naked, there are no clothes to cover you, hungry, no bread to feed you. But what a glory lights up this your shame, which is a token of perdition only to the pagans."* The persecution could not stop here; it must necessarily become more bloody. The following decree was issued A.D. 258: "The bishops, priests, and deacons, are to be put to instant death; the knights and senators to be deprived of their dignity and possessions, and if they still persist in their faith, to be beheaded. Women of condition are to be banished after confiscation of their goods; and those of the house of Cæsar who have confessed, or shall confess, the new religion, shall forfeit their goods, and shall be sent in chains into some distant province of the empire."† Such a decree gave of course a great impetus to the persecution, which became universal. Dionysius tells us "that persons of every age and condition were scourged, or put to death by the sword, or burned."‡ At Cæsarea three faithful confessors denounced themselves to the judges, and were condemned. At Rome, the Bishop Sixtus was put to death with four deacons in the catacombs. Fructuosus in Spain, Saturnin and Dionysius in Gaul, also fell

* "Fustibus cæsi. Imposuerunt compedes pedibus vestris; non favetur in metallis lecto. Vestis algentibus deest. Panis illic exiguus." (Cyprian, "Epist." lxxxvi. 2.)

† "Quæ autem sunt in vero ita se habent. Rescripsisse Valerianum ad senatum ut episcopi et presbyteri et diacones incontinenti animadvertantur. Senatores vero et egregii viri equites Romani dignitate amissa, etiam bonis spolientur et si, ademptis facultatibus, christiani esse perseverarint, capite quoque mulctentur." (Gieseler, "Church History," Vol I., 20.)

‡ Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xi.

victims. The Church of Carthage had again the honour of being exposed to the rudest blows. Cyprian addressed to it his "Exhortation to Martyrdom." In order to induce the Christians to put on joyfully this purple robe, dyed in the blood of the Lamb,* the Bishop of Carthage reminds them of the rich promises of Scripture to the faithful and true witnesses. He concludes by saying: "In such meditations the spirit grows strong, and becomes proof against the terrors of the Evil One and the menaces of the world. Earth is shut against us in times of persecution, but heaven is opened; Antichrist threatens, but Christ sustains; death overtakes us, but immortality follows; the world recedes, but paradise receives us; this life of a day is quenched, eternal life begins. What honour, what peace, what joy, to depart thus gloriously from the midst of persecution and anguish, to shut the eyes on the world and men, to open them on the face of God and of His Christ: O short and blessed voyage!"† Cyprian was soon to know from experience the blessedness thus so vividly conceived by him, of a courageous death for the truth.

We know what was the melancholy end of Valerian, how after his defeat by the King of Persia he was compelled ignominiously to follow in his triumphal train. His son Gallienus issued the first edict of toleration to the Church. This edict imported that the emperor desired to extend his noble protection to the whole

* "De agno lanam ipsam et purpuram misi." ("De Exhort. Martyr.," iii.)

† "Quanta est dignitas et quanta securitas exire hinc lætum. . . Tum feliciter migrandi O quanta velocitas!" (Ibid., xiii.)

world, and that the bishops might claim this protection against all who sought to trouble them.* By another decree, he gave the Christians permission to visit their cemeteries. During the anarchy which characterised the period intervening between Gallienus and Aurelian, and which is justly known in history as the period of the Thirty Tyrants, the Church enjoyed complete repose. The competitors who contended for the empire had enough to do in opposing each other, and did not trouble themselves about the Church. This security lasted throughout the reign of Aurelian. That emperor was compelled at first to devote all his energies to the conflict with the barbarians; then he required his whole forces to overthrow the brilliant but ephemeral kingdom of Palmyra, rendered illustrious by the genius and valour of a woman. We find a striking proof of the security of the Christians during this period in the sumptuous life of a worldly and heretical bishop, who reigned like a veritable prince within his church. We shall presently see the ground of the sentence of condemnation passed upon Paul of Samosata in the Council of Antioch (A.D. 269). Some bishops committed the error of calling in the intervention of Aurelian in a purely religious question, and the emperor, with rare wisdom, declared himself incompetent to interfere. When he died he was on the eve of departing from his principles of tolerance towards the Christians; indeed he had already issued a decree† against them, which his premature death rendered nugatory. Himself an ardent devotee of the oriental divinities, he only wanted leisure

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xiii.

† Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," vi.

to become a Decius or Valerian towards the Christians.* His successors, until Dioclesian, left the Church in peace, but persecution was to break forth with only the greater vehemence for being so long repressed.

§ III. *The Last General Persecution.*

Dioclesian was raised from the lowest rank to the supreme power (A.D. 284). He was more than a mere soldier favoured by fortune; he had the genius of a profound politician. He was fully conscious that the great peril threatening the empire was from the barbarous nations, whose hosts were already beating like great waves against its boundaries both in East and West, and which had already more than once effected wide breaches in those boundaries; he was determined therefore to bring all his force to bear upon their repression. One man alone was not sufficient for such a task. To put able generals at the head of armies which were to fight far away from the emperor, was to create so many usurpers, to foster civil war, and to turn against the empire the very forces designed for its defence. Dioclesian could devise but one method of averting this danger, namely, to give the purple at once to those who would otherwise infallibly seize it for themselves, and to share a power which there was no possibility of preserving intact, except at the cost of constant sanguinary struggles. Four emperors were thus raised at once to the throne—Dioclesian and Maximian with the title of Augustus, Galerius and Constantius under the

* Aurelian had reared at Rome a temple to the sun. (Vopiscus, xxv.)

name of Cæsar. Maximian was an old comrade in arms of Dioclesian, and belonged to an obscure family in Pannonia. Galerius and Constantius were men utterly unlike. The former had all the vices and all the passions of paganism, joined with much natural impetuosity and courage; the latter united to the skill of a consummate general, a moderate, tolerant, and elevated spirit, in which there was manifest much of the generous influence of the new religion, though he had not positively embraced it. Dioclesian governed in the East; Maximian reigned over Italy, Africa, and the Islands; Galerius over Thrace and the Danubian provinces; and Constantius over Gaul, Spain, and Britain.

The end which Dioclesian proposed to himself seemed attained; the invaders were everywhere driven back, and no usurpers had arisen in the victorious armies. But if the foreign foes were vanquished, another not less formidable invasion was making swift though silent progress—the invasion of foreign thought. How could it be otherwise, when Dioclesian himself lent all his power to the patronage of new ideas? He dealt the last blow to the ancient constitution of the empire by substituting the pompous and servile forms of oriental monarchy, for the pseudo-republican forms of the monarchy of the Cæsars. His despotism was not more oppressive than that of his predecessors, but it was more Asiatic.* He was constantly absent from the capital of the empire, and showed a marked preference for Nicomedia. Again, without falling into the mad and

* See some most interesting reflections on this transformation in M. Broglie's "History," Vol. I.

impure follies of Heliogabalus, he patronised, like him, the worship of the sun, and although bearing himself the surname of the greatest of the Olympic gods, he did all in his power to ensure the predominance of the religions of the East.* Great as a general and as a statesman, Dioclesian seems to have been weak and superstitious in reference to religion. He was not cruel by nature, but he might easily become so under the influence of pagan fanaticism. During the early part of his reign, the Church continued to develop itself freely. It increased day by day in numbers and in importance. Religious edifices were multiplied, and rivalled in dignity the pagan temples. At Nicomedia itself, opposite the imperial palace, a Christian temple rose upon a hill, a striking monument of the progress of the new religion, and of the tolerance of the late emperors. In the court of Dioclesian, Christians were raised to the highest offices, among others Dorotheus, who had won great regard by some signal services. The Christian officers of the palace were authorised to attend to their religious duties with their whole households, without entering into any covenant with idolatry, and some governors of provinces received a dispensation from sacrificing to the idols.† The wife and daughter of the emperor showed an evident leaning towards the Christian faith.‡ Everything therefore seemed to promise the Church a long period of security, and perhaps even permanent toleration.

* Milman, "History of Christianity," Vol. I. p. 382

† Οἷς καὶ τὰς τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐνεχειρίζον ἡγεμονίας, τῆς περὶ τὸ θύειν ἀγωνίας αὐτοὺς ἀπαλλάττοντες. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. i.)

‡ Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," x.

There were still, indeed, here and there cases of suffering for the truth, but there was nothing that could justly be styled persecution. The reputed massacre of the Theban legion at Saint Maurice is so completely legendary, that it deserves no serious consideration.*

It was to be expected, however, that the pagan party, still so powerful, would try all means to hinder the success of Christianity. The outward growth of the Church was an offence to it, the fanatic worshippers of the false gods trembled with rage as they passed before the noble temples raised to the honour of the Crucified. Even the secret worship celebrated in the catacombs they had held to be intolerable, and they had again and again forbidden all ingress to these Christian sanctuaries; and now, should they endure the observance of these accursed rites in the full face of day and at a few paces from the imperial palace? They glanced at their own ranks, and felt themselves still an imposing majority; they had on their side the traditions of the past, the laws, and the emperors; for they could count upon the support of Diocletian, and Constantius Chlorus was too far away from the seat of the empire to cross their schemes. The pagan party was composed of philosophers like Hierocles, or like the illuminati of the

* Apart from the improbability of there being a whole legion composed of Christians, and of Christians of equal heroism, the silence of such historians as Eusebius, Sulpicius Severus, and Paul Orosius, is significant. The first mention of the story is in the Acts of St. Romanus (A.D. 520) and of Avitus. There has been supposed to be in the legend a sort of strange confusion with the acts of a Greek named Maurice, who suffered martyrdom with seventy Christian soldiers in Syria at the same period. (Mosheim, "Comment.," p. 27; Gieseler, "Church History," Vol. I.)

Alexandrian school, inclining more and more to theurgy; of magicians, who were either deceivers, or themselves deceived; of all the priests who lived by the altar; and of the abject mass of a corrupt people, who sought in superstition an excuse for its crimes in the present life, and a charm against the terrors of the life to come. The recognised head of this party was Cæsar Galerius, who from his childhood had been under the influence of a pagan mother, a vicious and superstitious woman, passionately attached to the idols, and consequently a sworn foe of the Christians, whose absence from the impious festivals over which she presided in her village, she could never forgive.* It is easy to imagine what would be the paganism of a small ignorant town of Illyria; it was the most abominable medley of all vile superstitions, without any admixture of that philosophic breadth of spirit, which asserted its influence more or less in all the great cities. The son of Romula, when he mounted to the throne, had not abjured either the bigotry of his native village or the blind hatred of his mother to Christianity. Prepared for a life of cruelty by one of infamy, full of the craving for sensual indulgence and the thirst for blood, which are such common associates, capable of every crime, Galerius was the hope of the pagan party, and was ready to be its passive instrument. He endeavoured to induce Dioclesian to depart from his moderate policy towards the Christians. It was already known that he was not favourable to their creed, and that he regarded himself as the

* "Erat mater ejus Deæ montium cultrix, dapibus sacrificabat pene quotidie. Christiani abstinebant. Hinc concepit odium adversus eos." (Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xi.)

vigilant guardian of the national traditions,—a position strangely assumed by an emperor who had introduced a considerable change into the constitution of the empire. We find the following declaration in a decree issued by him against the sect of the Manicheans: "The immortal gods have established and determined by their providence that which is good and true. Many wise men are prepared to maintain it. There must be no opposition to them; no new religion is to censure the old, for it is a great crime to overthrow that which our ancestors have established and which is the law of the State."* This love of that which was ancient might to a certain extent retard persecution, for the Church formed a respectable body in the State, and had the advantage of a tradition of no mean antiquity; but it might also, under the influence of hostile suggestions, give rise to the most sanguinary reprisals upon the Christians. Persecution commenced first in the camps. We have already pointed out how closely military service was associated with idolatrous practices. If the Christians were to be allowed to lead a peaceable life in the armies, it was necessary that their generals should voluntarily shut their eyes to many infractions of a discipline tainted with idolatry. Let any motive of self-interest come in to arouse their vigilance, and persecution was inevitable. It was part of Galerius' design to awaken everywhere suspicion of the Christians. A general, whose name is unknown, but who was probably an agent of Galerius, sought out diligently in his army all those who refused to sacrifice. He ignominiously expelled the soldiers who would not submit to his orders,

* Neander, "Church History," Vol. I. p. 197.

and some were even put to death. Galerius dared not as yet openly attack the great body of the Christians.* But it was easy to falsify facts by representing that which had occurred in the armies as a dangerous rebellion, and thus to move the mind of Dioclesian gradually to persecution. One circumstance, which reveals the complicity of the priests, contributed to dissipate his scruples. In the summer of the year 302, the emperor, finding himself in a city of the East, resolved, according to pagan custom, to consult the auguries of the gods by sacrifice. He was surrounded by several Christians, who were high dignitaries of the court. The priest, who had no doubt received his instructions, repeated the sacrifice several times, pretending that the divinity refused to give a reply in the presence of his worst enemies. This knavish trick accomplished its end; the emperor declared that all who would not sacrifice to the gods should be driven from his court, and he commanded that the sacrifice should be made compulsory in the armies.† These measures prepared the way for a general persecution. This was decreed in the year 303, after a council of the empire, held under the presidency of Dioclesian in presence of Galerius. The deliberation was long and serious. The aged emperor, already afflicted with the malady, rather moral than physical, which darkened his later life, and ultimately constrained him to lay down the empire of the world as an insupportable burden,

* Ἤδη δὲ σπανίως τούτων εἴς που καὶ δεύτερος θάνατον αντικατηλλατοντο. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. iv.)

† "Mactatæ hostiæ nihil ostendebant, tunc ira furens sacrificare non eos tantum qui sacris ministrabant, sed universos qui erant in palatio jussit, etiam milites." (Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," x.)

hesitated before giving so grave a decision. He represented that the Church formed an important party, that lengthened toleration had allowed it to gain much ground in the empire, and that it could not now be washed away by rivers of blood. Galerius had the advantage over him of an impetuous spirit and a stern resolve; his victory was certain over his irresolute and half-hearted colleague.* In order to dispel all remaining doubts from the mind of Dioclesian, it was decided to consult the oracle of Apollo. This was to refer the decision of the matter to those who were most eager for persecution, and to fulfil a long-cherished desire of the pagan priests. The answer of the oracle was given in no obscure allegorical form; it was the plain expression of the hatred of the priests; and Dioclesian was at length convinced.† On the morning of February 23rd, A.D. 303, the feast-day of the god Terminus, a centurion, followed by some soldiers, led the way to the Christian temple of Nicomedia. The gates were burst open, the building pillaged and destroyed. The pagan soldiery sought everywhere for the image of the proscribed god,‡ and failing to find this, they wreaked their senseless violence on a copy of the sacred scriptures, which they consigned to the flames. They were well guided by the instinct of hate: the Divine Word was in truth the foundation-stone of the Church. The next day the first decree of proscription was published in Nicomedia, and from

* "Diu senex furori ejus repugnavit, ostendens quam perniciosum esset inquietari orbem terræ." (Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xi.)

† "Misit ad Apollinem Milesium. Respondit ille ut divinæ religionis inimicus." (Ibid., x.)

‡ "Revulsis foribus simulacrum Dei quæritur." (Ibid., xii.)

thence speedily spread throughout the empire. Its purport was that "the Christian temples were to be razed to the ground, and the copies of the sacred books thrown into the fire; that the Christians who held any office should be deprived, and slaves persisting in adherence to the proscribed faith could never be enfranchised."* The Christians were further deprived of the right of bringing any action into court, though any kind of accusation might be brought against them without their having the opportunity of self-defence. The decree concluded with a threat of torture.† There were still some reservations in this first edict; no mention was made of capital punishment, but when once the spirit of persecution is aroused, it bursts through all restraints. The persecutors are inevitably drawn on to extremes on which they had not calculated, because they had left out of their reckoning one element—the unbending courage and heroism of conscience. This first decree bears clearly the impress of the pagan philosophers; neither Dioclesian nor Galerius would have themselves thought of proscribing the sacred scriptures; this was the cowardly vengeance of impotent men of letters, anxious to destroy the Divine book by which they were confounded. The edict of Dioclesian placed the Christians at a greater disadvantage than any previous decree. Against them, as Seneca said of slaves,

* Τὰς μὲν ἐκκλησίας εἰς ἔδαφος φέρειν, τὰς δὲ γραφὰς ἀφανεῖς πυρι γενέσται, καὶ τοὺς μὲν τιμῆς ἐπειλημμένους, ἀτίμους, τοὺς δὲ εν οἰκετίαις, εἰ ἐπιμένοιεν ἐν τῇ τοῦ χριστιανισμοῦ προθέσει, ἐλευθερίας στερεῖσθαι. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. ii.)

† "Edictum, quo cavebatur ut tormentis subjecti essent, adversus eos omnis actio caleret, ipsi non de injuria, non de rebus ablatis agere possent." (Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xiii.)

everything was lawful. Even in the ordinary affairs of life they had to deal no longer with judges, but with bitter enemies, whether cloaked under the toga of the magistrate, or the mantle of the philosopher. Let it be remembered that the religious society thus proscribed had become very numerous, that it had enjoyed now for many years a degree of toleration which had favoured its growth; and we can form some idea of the thrill of indignation which ran through the whole community, when the decree was formally proclaimed which legalised against its members every sort of iniquitous proceeding, from spoliation in private life, to violence in the Forum and all public places. The Church yet numbered many humble Christians, ready, like their Master, to be led to the slaughter without opening the mouth; but it had also in its ranks men of less simple piety, who knew that they formed a strong and powerful party, and who were disposed to defend their rights. To this class belonged the unknown Christian who, the morning after the promulgation of the decree, tore it down from the very walls of the imperial palace, and replaced it with these ironical words: "These are the victories over the Goths and the Sarmatians!"* Carried at once to the stake, he bore his torture with the manly courage of a hero of old. We have already alluded to a notable change in the attitude of many of the accused at this time towards their persecutors; their replies, as we have them in the "Acts of the Marytrs," are more haughty, and some do not scruple to call the proconsuls tyrants. We feel that the Church submits as yet, but that it could

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. v.

soon assume the defensive; there is in this the evidence of its growth, but also the token of a certain deterioration of religious feeling. It is clearly less easy to the Christians to be resigned; even the women show that they are under new influences, and many of them attempt to elude their persecutors by committing suicide. At Rome, a Christian Lucretia plunges the dagger into her own breast to escape dishonour;* and at Antioch, a mother and her two daughters throw themselves into the river, in terror of the torture awaiting them.† Between these two classes—the confessors who are at once patient and heroic, and those who are heroic only—comes in the whole multitude of ordinary Christians. As in the previous persecution, there were many defections; a large number, shrinking from open apostasy, sought some circuitous mode of evading death. Instead of the copies of the Holy Scriptures, they surrendered the manuscripts of some heretical books, and thus tried to satisfy at once their conscience and their cowardice. They were called *traditores*, and their prudence was judged blameworthy by an influential party in the African Church. Thus arose the Donatist dispute, which was destined to excite such stormy controversy in after times.

To return, however, to the story of this terrible persecution. A short time after the proclamation of the decree, an incendiary fire broke out on two occasions in Dioclesian's palace at Nicomedia. Galerius, of course, charged it upon the Christians; they, with more show of reason, accused him of being the author of it, since it was his great aim and interest to fan the flame of

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. xiv. † Ibid., xii.

persecuting zeal, and not for an instant to allow it to subside.* It is remarkable that the same calumnious charge which gave rise to the first persecution of the Church, should have also been used to stimulate the last, and that under Dioclesian, as under Nero, the Christians were made the victims of a false charge of incendiarism. Dioclesian, rendered furious by the spectacle of the fire,† issued three new edicts, the purpose of which was to sweep away Christianity from the earth. The first enforced the imprisonment of all the bishops; ‡ the second commanded that they should be put to the torture to constrain them to apostatise; § the third, extending to Christians indiscriminately the measures taken at first against the bishops alone, ordered that in all towns and villages they should be compelled to sacrifice to the gods, under penalty of the most fearful tortures.‖ This last edict was, to use the powerful words of Constantine, written with the point of a poignard,¶ and it gave full scope to the cruel genius of the torturers. So soon as these edicts were promulgated throughout the empire, persecution rose to an almost unparalleled height of fury.** The churches were pulled down, the sacred books torn to

* "Occultis ministeriis palatio subjecit incendium." (Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xiv.)

† "Furebat imperator." (Ibid., xv.)

‡ Τοὺς πανταχόσε τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν προεστῶτας εἱρκταῖς καὶ δεσμοῖς ἐνεῖραι. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. vi.)

§ Τοὺς κατακλείστους θύσαντας μὲν, εἰ̓ν βαδίζειν ἐπ' ἐλευθερίας ἐνισταμένους δὲ, μυρίαις καταξαίνειν βασάνοις. (Ibid.)

‖ Καθολικῷ προστάγματι πάντας πανδημεὶ τοὺς κατα πόλιν θύειν τε καὶ σπένδειν τοῖς εἰδώλοις ἐκελεύετο. (Eusebius, "De Martyr. Palestin.," iii.)

¶ Eusebius, "Vita Constant.," ii. 5.

** "Vexabatur ergo universa terra." (Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xvi.)

atoms and cast into the flames; the prisons were filled with Christians; the vilest criminals were let loose to make way for them, and by day and night their limbs were torn and lacerated by instruments of torture. Blood flowed in torrents. Flight was very difficult, for there was scarcely a remote hamlet where a copy of the decree had not been affixed. All classes of society paid their tribute of blood to the fury of the pagans. The wife and daughters of Dioclesian were themselves compelled to sacrifice to the false gods,* a sufficient indication that no power in high places would avail to shield those Christians who remained firm and faithful. The first victims were chosen from the emperor's own suite, from among his officers, and their high rank only fired the rage of their executioners, who inflicted on them the most horrible tortures. One young man of the emperor's staff, named Peter, was slowly burnt upon a gridiron, after being torn almost limb from limb. Dorotheus, who had been honoured with all the confidence of his master, was strangled.† One little town in Phrygia was entirely destroyed by fire, because the greater part of its inhabitants had forsaken their idols.‡ In proconsular Africa, many Christians were thrown to the wild beasts. It seemed sometimes as if the heavenly calm and courage in their faces daunted for a moment the rage of the leopards and lions.§ Some were quartered or burnt, others cast into the sea or torn in pieces with instruments of iron, and some died of famine in the prisons. The persecution extended even

* Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xv.

† Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. vi.

‡ "Ολην χριστιανῶν πολιχνην. (Ibid., ii.)

§ Ibid., vii.

to the deserts of the Thebaid. We learn from the evidence of Phileas, Bishop of Thmuis, that at Alexandria the magistrates abandoned the condemned to the fury of the populace, who tormented them in cruel sport.* A number of bishops perished, among others Peter of Alexandria. Felix, Bishop of Tabora, in Africa, withstood all efforts to make him surrender his copy of the Holy Scriptures. "Here is my body," he said, "take it and burn it; but I will not deliver up to men the book which contains the acts and words of my Saviour." † The narrative of Eusebius, who resided at Cæsarea, shows how bloody was this persecution, for there is no reason to suppose that Palestine was treated with exceptional severity. The Churches of Italy were exposed to terrible sufferings. The martyrdom of St. Sebastian and of St. Agnes took place at this period. Gaul alone was exempt, thanks to the moderation and tolerant spirit of Constantius Chlorus, who gave only a formal compliance with the edict of Dioclesian. He destroyed the religious edifices, but suffered no violence to be done to the persons of any. ‡

It is not our task to trace in detail the great political and religious revolution, which put an end to this persecution, and in a general manner to all persecution of the Christians. To do this would be to enter upon the history of the fourth century. It is well known that after the voluntary retirement of the two Augusti—Dioclesian and Maximian Herculius—two new emperors

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. x.

† Ruinart, "Acta Martyr."

‡ "Dei templum quod est in hominibus incolume servavit." (Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xix.)

ascended the throne. These were Maximinus Daza, who reigned in Syria and Egypt, and Severus in Africa and Italy, concurrently with Galerius and Constantius Chlorus. Constantius was soon succeeded by his son Constantine. In order to reach his dying father, Constantine was obliged to deceive Galerius, in whose court he was a hostage. He started the day before that fixed for his departure, and rendered pursuit impossible by killing all the imperial relays of horses on his road. For one moment there were six competitors for the empire, for the old Maximinus Herculius—who had not the same passion for gardening as Dioclesian—had joined himself to his son Maxentius in an attempt to gain possession of Rome, and had been successful. Severus, vanquished and killed by him, was succeeded by Licinius. During the sanguinary conflicts provoked by these ambitious rivals, the Christians had respite. Persecuted for a time by Maximinus Daza, who was leagued with Galerius, they soon obtained peace throughout the East. Their most determined enemy—tortured with the same fearful disease that had destroyed Herod Agrippa, in despair over the loss of Italy, wrested from him by Maxentius, and with his resources completely exhausted—turned to the God of the Galileans. The edict of toleration issued by Galerius is one of the most amazing monuments of history. In it he declared that he had vainly endeavoured to bring back the Christians to the religion of the empire; that it was to be feared many of them, if they abandoned their own worship, would not embrace any other; and that consequently the emperor, in his clemency, conceded to them the right to assemble together, and only asked

of them that they should pray to their God for his restoration to health.*

Christianity thus took its place among the recognised religions of the empire. It received that which for three centuries it had been vainly demanding—a legal status, and it won this concession from the fiercest of its foes. It was a signal triumph. Would to God that the proscribed religion had rested content with the right to subsist unmolested, and to develop itself freely in the empire, and had never ambitiously sought and attained to a material kingdom, since for the Church thus to reign is to be in subservience to an all-powerful protector! It is well known that the young and brilliant Constantine, son of Constantius Chlorus, if he did not actually become a Christian, at least espoused ardently the cause of the new religion, and destroyed the pagan party at the Pons Milvius by his victory over Maximius, after forcing his father-in-law, Maximian Herculius, to put an end to his own life, as the chastisement for his repeated conspiracies. Maximinus had for some time persecuted the Church at Rome, and he would doubtless have sought support in the pagan party, had he been victorious. In his person, however, that party received its final defeat. The edict of Milan

* "Contemplatione mittissimæ nostræ clementiæ, intuentes, et consuetudinem sempiternam qua solemus cunctis hominibus veniam indulgere promptissimam in his quoque indulgentiam nostram credidimus porrigendam, ut denuo sint christiani, et conventicula sua componant ita ut ne quid contra disciplinam agant. . . Unde juxta hanc indulgentiam nostram, debebunt Deum suum orare pro salute nostra, ut undequoversum respublica perstet incolumis, et secure vivere in sedibus suis possent." (Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xlviii.; Eusebius, "H. E.," VIII. xvii.)

(A.D. 313) apprised the world that a new era had begun. Unhappily the Church also entered on an altogether new career—that of patronage and state protection.* That which it was about to gain in material power, it would lose in moral force and independence. The victory of Constantine over Licinius, which had freed him from Maximinus Daza, the ally of Maximius, gave him the empire of the world, and he was able to raise to the throne the religion so long proscribed.

We must pause, however, on the threshold of these new times, which do not come within the scope of our present work.†

If we cast a retrospective glance over this long and bloody struggle, we shall perceive that there were only eight distinct great persecutions.

The first burst forth under Nero (A.D. 64); the second under Trajan (A.D. 110), after his correspondence with Pliny the younger; the third under Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 177); the fourth under Septimus Severus (A.D. 194); the fifth under Maximinus (A.D. 238); the sixth under Decius (A.D. 249); the seventh under Valerian (A.D. 257); and the eight under Dioclesian (A.D. 308). Augustine counts ten great persecutions,‡ but this computation supposes one under Adrian, and another under Aurelian. We find no reason for such a calculation but the desire to accommodate the facts of history to an arbitrary typology.

* Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutorum," xlviii.

† See, on this whole revolution, M. Broglie's work, "L'Eglise et l'Empire Romain au Quatrieme Siècle," Vol. I.

‡ Augustine, "De Civ. Dei," XVII. lii. Sulpicius Severus, "Hist. Sacræ," II. xxxiii.

BOOK SECOND.

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH IN THE SECOND CENTURY.

We shall devote this portion of our work to the biography and characterisation of the Fathers of the second and third centuries. Their doctrine we shall consider presently; our object now will be to bring their individuality into full relief.

§ I. *The Apostolic Fathers.**

The Apostolic Fathers are to be regarded not as great writers, but as great historic characters. They preserved the treasure of evangelical doctrine, without themselves fully knowing all it contained. They esteemed it nevertheless more highly than their own life,

* Beside the works already quoted, we refer the reader to Cotelier, "Patrum qui temporib. Apost. floruerunt Opera," Editio Clericus, 1698. Hæfele, "Patres Apostol.," Edit., 1847. Dressel, "Patrum Apost. Opera," Leipzig, 1857. (This is the edition from which we shall quote.) See also Hilgenfeld, "Die Apostolischen Væter," Halle, 1857.

which they were ever ready to lay down at the call of duty. The Christians of this epoch were martyrs in the holiest of causes, and set a sacred seal on the claims of God by their faithfulness to the truth, and on the rights of man by their resistance to all religious tyranny. The apostolic Fathers accept the great principles laid down in the previous period by St. Paul and St. John. They never appeal to the ceremonial law in opposition to the law of Christian liberty. But since Judæo-Christianity was not so much a simple fact, as the embodiment of a principle and natural tendency of the human heart, we must not be surprised to meet with it again under new forms in the orthodox Church, at the commencement of the second century. The divergencies of view among these early Fathers do not reach positive opposition. There is no collision of hostile parties ; no stormy discussion is raised, but there are, nevertheless, very distinct shades of doctrine variously colouring the faith in Christ, which is held in common by all. On the one hand, we have Pauline doctrine represented by Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp. The teaching of Polycarp bears also the distinct impress of the spirit of St. John, whose immediate disciple he was. On the other hand, the idealistic symbolism of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is carried to the verge of Gnosticism by the author of the Epistle known as that of Barnabas. Lastly, Papias and the writer of the allegory of the Pastor, revive, if not the views, at least the principles, of Judæo-Christianity.

We have but little reliable information about three of the apostolic Fathers — Clement, Ignatius, and

Polycarp. They are better known to us through their writings than through the often contradictory testimony of history. Clement of Rome has been confounded, by an error easily to be understood, with the Clement of Philippi whom St. Paul calls his fellow-labourer.* The ancient Church, knowing that Clement had been an immediate disciple of the apostles, and finding the same name in one of Paul's Epistles, did not hesitate to associate him with the missionary travels of the great apostle. He is not, however, once named in the Acts. Indeed we learn from the Epistle to the Philippians, that Clement of Philippi was still in his native city, till within a very short period before the persecution under Nero. Now, it is quite certain that Clement of Rome was in that city at the time of the martyrdom of the two apostles. No reliance can be placed on the fables of the "Clementines," according to which Clement, who is elsewhere confounded with the consul of the senatorial family of the same name persecuted under Domitian, became the fanatic follower of St. Peter, and opponent of St. Paul.†

If we adhere strictly to the evidence of history, we shall recognise in Clement a member of the Church of Rome, a pagan by birth, who was converted by the preaching of Paul, or by that of one of his fellow-labourers. According to Irenæus, he was personally

* Philip. iv. 3; Origen, "In Johann.," I. xxix. Eusebius, "H. E.," III. xv. All these passages are carefully reproduced in the Introduction to the Epistle of Clement by Cotelier.

† See the letter from Clement to Peter in the "Clementines," Ulhorn Edition. See also the epitome of it in Cotelier, I. 749.

acquainted with the apostles, and through his association with them, became the living echo of their preaching. * Clement of Alexandria goes so far as to call him an apostle; Origen speaks of him only as a disciple of the apostles. † Regarded by Peter and John as one of the Christians of Rome, most eminent for piety and capacity, he was raised by them to the bishopric, not, be it remembered, to that which was regarded as the episcopal dignity in the third and fourth centuries, but to the bishopric in its primitive form, which was identical with the office of elder. Clement shared the government of the Church with Linus and Anencletus, who were bishops or elders with him. After the death of his colleagues, he remained the sole elder of the apostolic epoch, and as such exercised a moral power of peculiar weight. ‡ We

* Ὁ καὶ ἑωρακὼς τοὺς μακαρίους ἀποστόλους. (Irenæus, in Eusebius, "H. E.," V. vi.)

† Ὁ ἀποστόλος Κλήμης. (Clement of Alexander, "Strom.," IV. xvii; Origen, "De Princip.," II. iii.)

‡ Regarded from the stand-point of episcopal theories, it is impossible to harmonise the evidence of the Fathers as to Clement's entry upon his office. According to Tertullian, he seems to have been the immediate successor of St. Peter. (De Præscript.," xxxii.) This is also St. Jerome's statement: "Et Clemens vir apostolicus, qui post Petrum romanam ecclesiam rexit." (In Esaia, 52.) St. Augustine, on the other hand, and the "Apostolical Constitutions," speak of Linus as the successor of St. Peter. (St. Aug., Epist. liii., "Ad Genedosum;" "Constitut.," VII. xlvi.) Irenæus makes Anencletus follow Linus, so that Clement would not come till third from the apostles. ("Ad Hæres.," III. iii; Eusebius, "H.E.," V. vi.) An attempt has been made to solve the difficulty by supposing Linus and Anencletus to have died before Peter, in the persecution under Nero; but this is contrary to the direct testimony of Eusebius. Epiphanes suggests that Clement, for the sake of peace, gave place to Linus in the bishopric. ("Hæres.," XXVII. vi.) Why has it not occurred to any of these, that Clement himself puts us upon the track of the true solution?

know nothing with certainty about his death. But he has himself made us acquainted with the most important event of his life—his official intervention in the troubles which were anew agitating the Church of Corinth. His letter brings before us the principal features of his moral physiognomy. He wrote towards the end of the first, or beginning of the second century.

We are acquainted with the occasion and aim of this letter. He designed to restore harmony in one of the most glorious Churches of the apostolic age—in that Church of Corinth whose dissensions Paul himself had once pacified, and which seems, from the description given of it in the commencement of the Epistle,* to have passed long years of calm and prosperity. The writer first proceeds to describe the evil he desires to cure — that jealous and seditious spirit which, nurtured among the Corinthians by their proud self-complacency, has deprived them both of righteousness and peace. Clement earnestly calls upon the schismatics to repent, and to seek once more the blessings of the meek and lowly.† He enforces his exhortations by many examples drawn from sacred history, insisting especially on the gentleness of Christ. In the second part of his letter, the pious elder of the Church of Rome enters on an appeal based on more directly

In his Epistle he recognises only two degrees in the Church hierarchy—elders or bishops, and deacons. He was then himself one of the bishops or elders of the Church at Rome at the same time with Linus and Anencletus. The manner in which he is spoken of in the "Pastor Hermas" altogether justifies this opinion: "Scribe ergo duos libellos et mittes unum Clementi et unum Graptæ." ("Pastor Hermas," Visio II. 4.) See Hilgenfeld, "Apostolichen Væter," p. 99.

* Clement, "Epist. ad Corinth.," i. 3. † Ibid., vii. 25.

evangelical grounds. He reminds the Corinthians of the value and greatness of the Divine grace, of which they have been made the subjects. This grace they have already largely received, but there is a yet more plenteous manifestation of it reserved for them, in that glorious resurrection which the whole world joins to proclaim.* Clement invites the Christians to believe steadfastly in the love of God, and to respond to it by a holy life.† In the second part of his letter he also enters upon the ecclesiastical question, properly so called, and urges the Church of Corinth to maintain within itself a well-regulated organisation, and to preserve it with the same vigilance and care, as the ancient people of God bestowed on the Levitical appointments.‡ The epistle concludes with an eulogium on charity, and with fresh exhortations to humility and concord.

Such is in substance the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. It is not remarkable for brilliance of style or power of thought. It is loosely put together, and the thread of the argument is often lost in the profusion of illustration. We feel in reading it, that the writer is not a man of powerful mind, nor has he that passionate energy which characterises his race. Absorbed in the idea of the necessity of harmony, which is in his eyes the universal law of the world, he finds eloquent words in which to set forth its manifestations in the great scenes of nature. "The heavens are under the control of God, and submit themselves to Him day and night in peace;

* Clement, "Epist. ad Corinth.," xxiii. 28.
† Ibid., xxxi. 40. ‡ Ibid., xl. 48.

they follow their appointed course without interruption or mutual disturbance. The sun and moon and the chorus of the stars obey His command, and move on harmoniously and undeviatingly in the course He has marked out for them." Clement thus passes in review the various spheres of creation, and completes the sublime picture with these words: "The mighty Creator, Lord of all creatures, has ordained that all things should be wrought in peace and harmony, diffusing His benefits upon all, and most of all, loading those with His goodness who have fled for refuge to lay hold of His mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and majesty for ever and ever."*

Clement's piety is not of the sombre and melancholy cast, which, under pretext of doing honour to grace, despises nature. He admires natural beauty; he sees in it a divine element, and loves to meditate upon it. He challenges its testimony in support of the resurrection. "Let us observe," he says, "the resurrection which is daily wrought before our eyes. Day and night testify to it. The night passes away, the day rises again. Day flees, and night returns. Let us consider the fruits of the earth, and the seed, how it grows. The sower goes forth to sow his seed in the earth, and the seed laid in the soil, bare and barren grain, there dies. From this death Divine Providence brings forth the germs of new life; they multiply and bear fruit." † That which strikes us

* Ταῦτα παντα ὁ μέγας δημιουργὸς καὶ δεσπότης τῶν ἁπάντων ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ καὶ εἰρήνῃ προσέταξεν εἶναι. (Clement, "Ad Corinth.," xx.)

† Ἰδωμεν τὴν κατὰ καιρὸν γινομένην ἀνάστασιν. (Ibid., xxiv.)

in Clement is his serenity. We feel that he himself enjoys that deep and abiding peace, which he urges the Corinthians to seek.* It is impressed on every page he writes, while his thoughts flow on like a broad and quiet stream, never swelling into a full impetuous tide. The commandments of God are, to use his own expression, inscribed in the breadth and depth of his heart.† Hence the fulness of expression which he gives to them. We feel that this man has a great love for Jesus Christ, and calm as is his nature, he finds words full of loftiness and fire when this is his theme. "Behold," he says, "the way of our salvation, Christ Jesus, the high priest of our sacrifice, the comforter and strength of our weakness. Through Him we rise to sit in heavenly places. He unveils to us His face, glorious in holiness; by Him the eyes of our heart are opened, our barren and darkened understanding expands beneath His shining into marvellous light. God has been pleased to reveal to us in Him the excellent glory of His majesty, He being so much higher than the angels, as He hath by inheritance a more excellent name than they."‡

If in Clement we note the principal traits of the Roman character, we find in Ignatius altogether a Greek of Asia Minor. His soul burns like the sun in his native sky. The circumstances of his later life alone are known to us. It is ascertained that he was Bishop of Antioch, and like Clement, an imme-

* Clement, "Ad Corinth.," ii. † *Ἐπί τὰ πλάτη τῆς καρδίας.* (Ibid.)

‡ *Διὰ τούτου ἡ ἀσύνετος καὶ ἐσκοτωμένη διανοια ἡμῶν ἀναθαλλει εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς.* (Ibid., xxxvi.)

diate disciple of the apostles. Although he had in all probability seen and known St. John, and had not had any personal acquaintance with St. Paul, he is nevertheless clearly a disciple of Paul's school. The teaching of Paul has taken strong hold of his mind, and in his character he recalls to us the great apostle. Ignatius has too often been regarded as the most powerful champion of the episcopal system, and as imbued with all the prejudices of the clerical hierarchy. Thanks to recent discoveries, these assertions can now be truly weighed, and are found wanting. In fact, according to a Syriac manuscript, which has thrown much light upon this question, three only of the seven letters attributed to Ignatius are genuine. It is even possible for us to distinguish the original text from the spurious addition.* This expurgation has restored the letters of Ignatius to their true character. If they still show a leaning towards episcopacy, it is in the measure in which such a manifestation was possible, at the commencement of the second century; and instead of a tissue of legends, we have precise details as to the martyrdom of the courageous bishop.†

Pliny's letter to Trajan has shown us the great

* See Note B, at the end of the Volume.

† We do not admit the authenticity of the "Acts of the Martyr Ignatius," even in their most modern version, for the following reasons: First, the "Acts" were not known to Eusebius, for he gives no account of the interview between Trajan and Ignatius, which he would certainly have done had he read the circumstantial details given in the "Acts." Second, they speak of a general persecution which did not take place under Trajan. Third, they contain a flagrant anachronism, for they place the martyrdom of St. Ignatius in the year 106, and consequently assign Trajan's visit to Antioch to that date. Now, that visit was not made till A.D. 115, on his return from his war with the Parthians.

progress made by Christianity in Asia Minor. This progress had alarmed the magistrates, and called forth severe measures of repression; the number of the accusations advanced, doubtless gave rise to the letters of the proconsul of Bithynia. The same causes and effects must have been at work in the adjoining provinces. The Christians were condemned for high treason, and the decree of Trajan, dealing with secret societies, was applied to them. The most illustrious victim of these preliminary persecutions, which preceded the edict of A.D. 110, following on the letter of Pliny, was the Bishop of Antioch. He would be doubtless one of the first to fall, since it is certain he was one of the most active propagators of the new faith, and that if the temples of the gods were deserted, it was in great part through his influence. Antioch had been at the commencement of the second century a centre of active mission work, a focus of light for all Asia Minor. Ignatius, accused of the crime of high treason, was condemned to death; his sentence ran that he should be carried to Rome, there to fight with wild beasts. This torture had a double advantage; it ensured the terrible punishment of the offender, and it afforded to the Roman people, one of those sanguinary spectacles which it so dearly loved. For a long time all restrictions on this barbarous usage had been removed. The proconsul Aquilius, in the war of Mithridates, had sent to Rome as many as a thousand captives.* There had been no lack of victims under

* Examples of sentences similar to that pronounced on Ignatius may be seen in the Fathers. (Justin, "Dial. cum Tryph.," 110; "Hermas Pastor," Visio III. 2; "Epist. ad Diognat.," vii.)

Nero and his successors, who had been, indeed, lavish purveyors for the circus. The number had diminished under Trajan. Thus, when the occasion presented itself with some show of justice, to give the Roman populace a spectacle all the more choice for being now more rare, it was eagerly turned to account. Ignatius was to appear as a criminal of the worst class. He was sent to Rome, laden with chains, and led by ten soldiers, whom he likens to so many leopards. If his journey bears no resemblance to the triumphal march described in his apocryphal letters, there is no difficulty in supposing that he might be able from time to time to hold communication with his brethren. The conduct of the Churches towards him is a touching proof of the love which then bound all Christians together. They do not, indeed, send to him numerous embassies, but only some delegates as their representatives. The Church of Ephesus sends one of her bishops. Ignatius makes use of the liberty granted him, to address last words of exhortation to his companions in labour.

In chains, and under sentence of certain death, his martyrdom may be said to have already begun. Every word he utters under such circumstances, is full of weight and authority. What an impression must have been produced on the Church by the warnings of one who could thus write: "And now, in my chains, I learn that I have nothing more to desire. I have already begun to fight with wild beasts; from Syria to Rome, across sea and land, I was chained to ten leopards, whom kindness only rendered more cruel. Their outrages make me only the more the disciple of Him

who was crucified; but it is not this which justifies me."* Words thus written are the sad and sacred testimony of martyrdom. His three epistles, in their genuine form, are the farewells of a Christian hero. They have that terse conciseness which belongs to the language of action. It is clear they were written in haste, by a man who desired to put all his Christianity into the few words hurriedly penned, in moments when the vigilance of his fierce gaolers was relaxed. A strange fire flashes from those broken words as from fretted flints.

The first letter of Ignatius, written to Polycarp, the young Bishop of Smyrna, and the second, addressed to the Ephesians, in the person of their Bishop Onesimus, show that the martyr was the worthy follower of St. Paul and St. John, the faithful disciple of the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. Ignatius is in truth, great as a pastor, because of the great love he bears to the Churches, and his great devotion to them. If he had used some influence in building up episcopal power, he had, at least, a heroic conception of the duties of a bishop. The counsels which he gave to Polycarp on the exercise of his office, are those of a veteran transmitting to younger hands the torn banner which he himself has valiantly defended. All the images employed by him point to the militant state of the martyr Church. "Watch," he wrote to Polycarp, "like a good soldier of God; the prize is an incorruptible crown of life. Stand fast in the truth; be

* Θηριομαχῶ διὰ θαλάσσης καὶ γῆς. ("Epist. ad Roman.," iii.) We quote from the text given by Bunsen. ("Analecta Antenicœna," i.)

like iron under the anvil. It is the part of a good soldier to win, even though wounded. We must be ready to bear all for God, that He Himself may bear us up. Let thy zeal grow great. Learn to discern the times. Consider Him with whom is no time—the invisible, inaccessible God, who for us took on Him a visible form, who, knowing no sorrow, bowed beneath the burden of our woe, and suffered all for us."* "Labour, fight, run, suffer together," he adds, addressing the Christians of Smyrna; "seek to please Him who has chosen you to be His soldiers and servants; He will pay you your wages. Let not one of you turn deserter."† The pastor is not merely a soldier, in the view of Ignatius; he is also the watchful guardian of the flock, which he is to encompass ever with his prayers. "Watch," says he again, "with a spirit that never slumbers. Bear thou the burdens of all like a strong man. When the agony is great, great is the gain.‡ If thou lovest only the faithful disciples, thou art not merciful. Be long-suffering towards the most unworthy of the flock." Thus does Ignatius blend gentleness with power. He magnifies the office of a bishop, only because he forms so high a conception of the greatness of the bishop's responsibility, and demands of him nothing less than that he bear the burdens and sorrows of his whole Church, after the example of Christ Himself. That example he sets before Christians, that they may embrace in their large compassions the whole human race, and especially

* Νῆφε ὡς Θεοῦ ἀθλητής, στῆθι ἐν ἀληθεία ὡς ἄκμων τυπτόμενος. Ignatius, "Ad Polycarp," i.)

† Ibid. iii.

‡ Ὅπου πλείων κόπος, πολὺ καὶ κερδος. (Ibid., i.)

their most bitter enemies. "Pray," he says, "for all men (since there is hope of repentance for them also), that they may give themselves to God. Strive to enlighten them by your life. Be gentle and pitiful when they are insolent and cruel. Give them prayers for their blasphemies; let your steadfastness in the faith reprove their errors; show kindness for their hardness, never suffering yourselves to hate as they hate. Be followers of the Lord in all meekness. Who was ever more despitefully used than He, and shamefully entreated and spitted on?"* Let us not forget that he who thus wrote was himself already on the way to the circus at Rome.

We can imagine how the love of God and of Christ glowed in this ardent soul. He wrote to Polycarp: "The time has come to desire earnestly the possession of God, as the pilot desires the favourable wind, and the storm-driven sailor the quiet haven."† "And now," he says to the Romans, "there is not in all my heart one spark of desire for aught of earthly good."‡ We find, indeed, in Ignatius, that which may be called the passion for the unseen. In an image full of grandeur, he likens death to a glorious sunset, preceding the radiant dawn of a divine day.§ Faith opens to him far-reaching vistas of eternal bliss. Ignatius speaks of the cross with a mystical fervour. It is by the cross, Christ raises and builds up the living stones into the spiritual temple, till the topmost stone is brought

* Μὴ σπουδάζοντες ἀντιμιμήσασθαι αὐτούς. ("Ad Ephes.," ii.)

† "Ad Polycarp," i.

‡ "Ad Roman.," iv.

§ Καλὸν τὸ δῦναι ἀπὸ κόσμου πρὸς θεὸν, ἵνα εἰς αὐτὸν ἀνατείλω. ("Ad Roman.," i.)

forth with shoutings to the glory of God.* "My soul," he exclaims, "bows down adoring before the cross; that scandal of the unbelieving is salvation and eternal life to us."† He sees in the star followed by the Magi, the inauguration of that kingdom of Christ, the mystery of which cannot be fathomed by the Tempter, who, when he has spent all his efforts, has but prepared the way for the great triumph over death.‡

Ignatius has often been reproached for his epistle to the Romans, written on hearing that the Christians of Rome were making some efforts to obtain grace from the emperor. This letter exhibits a fanatic desire for martyrdom, and is certainly wanting in that admirable equilibrium of feeling, so striking in the epistle addressed by St. Paul to the Philippians under similar circumstances. The desire for death is not kept in subjection with Ignatius, as with the apostle, by the clear view of the services he could still render to the Church, by continuing in the flesh. His mind fixes upon one thing—the deliverance from the fetters of earthly life, the triumph with Christ, the full possession of God. "I am afraid," he writes to the Christians of Rome, when approaching their city, "I am afraid of your love. I fear lest it may do me wrong. I shall never again have such an opportunity of entering into the full possession of God. Let me become the prey of the wild beasts, that God may become wholly mine. I am God's wheat; the teeth of the fierce

* Ἀναφερομένοι εἰς τὰ ὕψη διὰ τῆς μηχανῆς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅς ἐστι σταυρὸς. ("Ad Ephes.," i.)

† Προσκύνημα τὸ ἐμὸν πνεῦμα τοῦ σταυροῦ. (Ibid., ii.) ‡ Ibid., iii.

beasts will but bruise me, that I may be changed into the fine bread of my God. Rather, then, do ye encourage the beasts, that they may become my tomb, and leave nought of my body to oppress me in my last sleep. I shall be a true disciple of Jesus Christ when the world sees my body no more."* These words are evidently the passionate expression of overwrought feeling. Ignatius would have been more truly like his Master, had he less ardently panted after martyrdom, and waited with patience till he also could say, "The hour is come;" as it assuredly did come in that age to every faithful witness of the truth. If, however, his impatience to die was excessive, that very excess was not without a salutary effect, at a time when the alternative of apostasy or death was about to be offered to thousands of Christians. They would remember with what joy Ignatius had entered the arena, the dust of which was to lick up the blood of so many martyrs; and above the roaring of the lions and the imprecations of the crowd, they would hear the joyous tones of his triumphal hymn: "Welcome, nails and cross; welcome broken bones, violence of fierce beasts, wounded limbs and bruised body; welcome all diabolic torture, if I may but obtain Jesus Christ."†

It is only just to remark further, that Ignatius had no idea of procuring to himself any merit towards God by his suffering. His humility was as great as his courage. After writing to the Ephesians, that it is better to be a Christian even in silence, than to speak without being so—in other words, that seeming is nothing, reality

* "Ad Roman.," iv.

† *Ἵνα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπιτύχω.* (Ibid.)

everything,* he says to the Romans, "Ask for me that I may have strength without and within, so that I may not merely speak but feel, that I may not be a Christian in word only but in deed and in truth. If I am found thus, I may be pronounced faithful, for then I shall not only appear so in the eyes of the world. Nothing that seems good to the world is truly good. Christianity not only commends its doctrine when it is hated of the world, but only then reaches its true grandeur." † Again, "Being now close to Rome," he wrote, "I think of many things in God; but I keep myself in subjection, lest I should yield to pride. It is a moment in which to tremble, lest I should be exalted above measure. Those who call me martyr, scourge me. I rejoice in the suffering, but I know not if I am worthy of it."‡ That which Ignatius so eagerly sought in death, was the full possession of Jesus Christ. "I crave for no mortal food; I desire no earthly pleasure. I want the bread of God,§ which is the body of Christ; I want to drink His blood, which is immortal love." These words reveal the whole soul of Ignatius, the deep piety, the fervent love to Christ, and the tone of exalted and mystical feeling, which is ordinary to him. It is easy to understand how such a man might become an object of ridicule in the eyes of the cynical and sceptical philosophers of an age of declining piety. After enduring torture in humility and obscurity,

* Ἄμεινόν ἐστι σιωπᾶν καὶ εἶναι ἢ λαλοῦντα μὴ εἶναι. ("Ad Ephes.," ii.)

† Οὐδὲν φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν. Οὐ πεισμονῆς τοῦ ἄργον, ἀλλὰ μεγέθους ἐστὶν ὁ χριστιανισμὸς ὅταν μισῆται ὑπὸ κοσμου. ("Ad Roman.," i.)

‡ Οἱ γὰρ λέγοντές μοι μάρτυς μαστιγοῦσί με. (Ibid., v)

§ Ἄρτον Θεοῦ θέλω. (Ibid., iv.)

Ignatius was made the victim of the biting raillery of Lucian, who, as we shall presently show, was undoubtedly aiming at him in his "Peregrinus," little deeming, when he did so, that he was furnishing valuable evidence to those who in after days would seek to establish the authenticity of the martyr's letters.

The "Acts of Ignatius" narrate in detail the circumstances preceding his torture, the impatience of the soldiers who hurried on his march, in order to arrive in Rome before the end of the public games; the eagerness of the Christians to meet him, and finally, his last words, obviously borrowed from his letters.* This whole story, however, is of no historical value. Like St. Peter and St. Paul, Ignatius came to his end obscurely. Nothing is more remote from the melodramatic than the death of the saints.

He left behind him, in Asia Minor, a young man, raised, perhaps by John himself,† to the office of elder in the Church of Smyrna, and destined to exercise a great influence over the Christians in those countries. This young man was Polycarp. Ignatius had already noted in him remarkable steadfastness in the faith.‡ He was planted upon the rock of apostolic teaching. The Church which he governed was one of the most flourishing in Asia Minor, and is exhibited to us in the Revelation as displaying courageous fidelity under

* See these details in the "Acta Ignatii;" Hæfele, "Patres Apostol.," 53-57; Cotelier, II. 171.

† Tertullian, "De Præscript.," xxxii.

‡ "Having known," says Ignatius, "thy doctrine founded in God as on a rock that cannot be shaken." (Ὡς ἐπὶ πέτραν ἀκίνητον.) "Ad Polycarp," i.

persecution.* Polycarp had been the immediate disciple of St. John, and ever cherished his sacred memory. It was the constant theme of his conversation and preaching. Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, writes: "I could point out the spot where the blessed Polycarp sat to teach. I could describe his gait, his countenance, all his habits, even the clothes he was accustomed to wear. I could repeat the discourses which he delivered to the people, and recall all that he said of his intimacy with St. John, and the narratives he used to relate about those who had seen the Lord upon earth. His memory was constantly dwelling on that which they had told him of the words, the miracles, the doctrine of Christ."† This valuable testimony shows how eminently qualified was Polycarp, for effecting the transition from the apostolic to the following age. He delighted to be the docile, almost passive echo of the apostles. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should not have displayed much originality, though commanding such universal respect. He was the living tradition of the Church. His letter to the Philippians is quite in harmony with the idea Irenæus gives us of him.‡ He appeals perpetually to

* Rev. ii. 8-11.

† Καὶ πέρι τοῦ κυρίου τινὰ ἦν ἃ παρὰ ἐκειναν ἀκηκόει. Irenæus, "Epist. ad Florinum," in Eusebius, "H. E.," V. xx.)

‡ The genuineness of this letter has been called in question by Daillé, and in our own day by Schwegler and Baur; but their objections rest on an *a priori* argument. The external evidence is very strongly in its favour. The testimony of Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, is of great weight. (Irenæus, "Adv. Hæres.," III. iii.; Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xiv., III. xxxvi.; St. Jerome, "Catal Script. Eccles.," xvii.) The question of its integrity is more difficult. The two last chapters seem like an interpolation, and possibly we may recognise in them the same hand which made

the memory of the apostles, and as he is addressing a Church founded by St. Paul, he invokes especially the name of the apostle of the Gentiles. "It is not in arrogance," he says, "I write to you these things, but because you have constrained me. In truth, I am not more able than any other, to reproduce the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, who, when he was with you, taught you the truth with all firmness and faithfulness, and who, being absent, wrote to you epistles, by which, if you rightly give heed to them, you will be built up in the faith."* His epistle, written shortly after the death of Ignatius, gives evidence that he had already attained a remarkable maturity in the Christian life. It is especially valuable for the information it contains as to the internal condition of the Churches. Polycarp sets himself to redress some abuses which had crept in at Philippi; he especially deprecates the love of money, which had become the cause of grave disorders. Like his master, he burns with indignation against heresy, and upbraids it in words which call to mind the epistles of John. He says: "He who wrests, according to his own evil heart, the words of the Lord Jesus, saying that there is no resurrection or judgment, is the firstborn of Satan.† I pray you all to give heed to the word of righteousness, and to exercise yourselves in all patience, as has been

additions to the epistles of Ignatius. We find a proof of this interpolation in a singular contradiction between chapters ix. and xiii. In chapter ix., Ignatius is represented as already dead; and in chapter xiii., the author asks for tidings of him, as if he were still living. "Et de ipso Ignatio et de his, qui *cum eo sunt*, quod certius agnoveritis significate." (See Bunsen, "Ignatius und seine Zeit," 118.)

* "Ad Philipp.," iii.

† Ibid.

done, not only by those whom you have seen—Ignatius, Sozimus, and Rufus—but by many others who have gone forth from you, as well as by Paul and the other apostles."* Polycarp is ever a faithful follower of tradition; his gaze turns by preference backwards. A very ancient biography, annexed to an old Latin manuscript of his epistle, speaks of him as the first bishop of Asia.† This aspiring epithet gives proof of his great influence. The latter part of his life belongs not to the transition era, but to the history of the second century. We shall have occasion to recur to it presently. It is enough for us now to remark that he repaired to Rome to confer with Anicetus on the question of Easter, and that he there met Marcion, whom he treated very roughly. He was put to death under Marcus Aurelius. The "Acts of his Martyrdom" is a valuable document for the history of the persecutions under the Antonines.‡ If Polycarp showed less impatience for death than Ignatius, he was no less courageous when the hour of suffering came. He had fled into the country to escape his pursuers, and was betrayed, under stress of torture, by a young man, who knew of his hiding-place. Aged as he was, his spirit never for a moment faltered. None can forget his reply to the proconsul, who urged him to blaspheme Christ and save his life.

* *Ἀσκεῖν πᾶσαν ὑπομονήν.* ("Ad Philipp.," ix.)

† "Totius Asiæ princeps." ("Patrum Apost. Opera," Edit. Dressel, "Prolegomena," 34.)

‡ The "Acts of Polycarp's Martyrdom" are of the highest antiquity. (See Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xv.) Irenæus ("Adv. Hæres.," III. iii.) appears to be acquainted with them. The legendary character of the close suggests an interpolation.

"Eighty and six years have I served Him," Polycarp answered, "and He has done me no wrong. How then shall I curse my King and my Saviour?"* The following prayer, of which there is no reason to doubt the genuineness, is said to be his: "Almighty God, the Father of Thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have learned to know Thee, I bless Thee that Thou hast counted me worthy, in this day and in this hour, to take a place among Thy martyrs, and to drink of the cup of Thy Christ, for the resurrection unto eternal life of my soul and body. May I be accepted of Thee as a sacrifice well-pleasing in Thy sight. I laud, I bless, I magnify Thee for all that which has befallen me."†

Two other apostolic Fathers form part of this group of the representatives of Paul's teaching: Quadratus, Bishop of Athens, and Aristides the philosopher, the two first apologists of Christianity. They belong to the transition period, for Quadratus says, in the fragment of his "Apology" which has come down to us, that there were still in his day some miraculous cures wrought by Jesus Christ.‡ All we know of these two writers is, that both pleaded the cause of Christianity with the Emperor Adrian.§ Aristides evidently belonged to a school far removed from Judaism, since he appeals without hesitation to the testimony of the Greek philosophers. St. Jerome regards the "Apology" of Quadratus as a very useful book, full of reason and of faith.‖

* Πῶς δύναμαι βλασφημήσαι τὸν βασιλέα μοῦ, τὸν σώσαντα με. ("Acta Martyr. Polyc.," vii.)

† Ibid.. xiv.

‡ Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," I. 75.

§ St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xix.

‖ "Librum valide utilem plerumque rationis et fidei." (Ibid.)

§ II. *The Fathers of the Church under the Antonines.**

If we except Polycarp, who belongs rather to the age of the apostolic Fathers, we have only two names to quote during this period. Justin Martyr and Irenæus leave far behind all the other teachers or bishops of the age of the Antonines. The most important episcopal sees are occupied by men of fervent piety and firm courage, but of only average, and sometimes narrow, intellect. The Church of Rome had in succession, at its head, Sixtus, who was arrested in the catacombs; Telesphorus, whose martyrdom produced a deep sensation;† and Anicetus, distinguished for his large and liberal views, though differing from Polycarp on some secondary points. Anicetus never ceased to show a respectful deference to him, and during Polycarp's sojourn in Rome, asked him to preside, instead of himself, at a consecration of elders.‡ To Anicetus succeeded, first, Soter, whose active charity is known§ to us through Dionysius of Corinth; then Eleuther and Victor, the latter of whom made himself prominent by his despotic pretensions in the question of Easter, and called forth, at the beginning of the succeeding period, a lively and

* Works to be consulted are: Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xii. xiii. xxi.–xxx. Jerome, "De Viris Illustribus." Anastasii, "Liber Pontificalis." Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," I. Lenain de Tillemont, "Mémoires," Vols. III., IV. Bœhringer, "Die Kirche Christi und ihe Zeugen," Vol. I. Müller, "Patrologie." Herzog, "Encyclopædia."

† "Ος καὶ ἐνδόξως ἐμαρτύρησεν. (Eusebius, "H. E.," V. vi.)

‡ Ibid., VI. xxiv.

§ After speaking of the charity of the Roman Christians, Dionysius, alluding to Soter, adds: "Θ οὐ μόνσν διατετήρηκεν ὁ μακάριος ὑμῶν ἐπίσκοπος. ("Your blessed Bishop Soter also cherished this charity.") (Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xxiii.)

legitimate opposition on the part of the bishops of Asia Minor and Gaul.

During the bishopric of Anicetus there arrived in Rome a Christian from Palestine, already known for his piety, who had undertaken a long journey to inquire into the state of the Churches. He was named Hegesippus. The cast of his mind was thoroughly Jewish ;* he was an entire stranger to the speculative genius of Greece, and paid more attention to facts than to ideas. He found himself, therefore, much at home in the Church of Rome, which in many respects corresponded to the Judaic type. Hegesippus had met, on board the vessel in which he made his voyage, Primus, Bishop of Corinth, and had had much conversation with him.† At his invitation, he had spent some time in the Church of Corinth, and had rejoiced to find the Christians there walking in all things according to apostolic tradition.‡ To him, tradition was a thing of primary importance; he even attached some value to the oral tradition of the Jews.§ He ignored the truth that in Christianity, even more than in Judaism, conformity to the letter by no means necessarily implies conformity to the spirit. Injustice, however, has been done to Hegesippus, when he has been

* Hegesippus made many translations from the Hebrew. Eusebius ("H. E.," V. xxii.) infers from this that he was a convert from Judaism to Christianity; but it is quite possible that he may have been born in Palestine, without having belonged to the synagogue.

† *Συνέμιξα πλέων εἰς Ῥώμην.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xxii.; Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," I. 217.)

‡ *Συνανεπάημεν τῷ ὀρθῷ λόγῳ.* (Ibid.)

§ *Ἄλλα δὲ ὡς ἐξ Ἰουδαϊκῆς ἀγράφου παραδόσεως μνημονεύει.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xxii.)

regarded as a Judaising-Christian. The high esteem in which he was held in Greece and Rome, the explicit adherence he gives to the doctrine which predominated in the West, negative any such idea. Hegesippus had undoubtedly a mind of Jewish order. James, of whom he has drawn a striking portrait,* was his ideal, rather than St. Paul; but he does not diverge on a single point from the orthodoxy of his time; he is, indeed, only too much in accord with the Western Church in the extravagant love of tradition. His first concern at Rome was to draw up an exact list of the bishops who had succeeded each other in the government of that Church.† His memoirs appear to have been rather a polemical treatise against the heretics than a history, properly so called, of the first ages of the Church‡. His leaning to tradition leads him to give the foremost place in his dissertations to the exposition of facts.

A short time after Hegesippus' journey to Corinth, the Church of that city was governed by a bishop who exerted a very wide influence. Dionysius had as much eloquence as learning; § by his activity in correspon-

* See this portrait. (Eusebius, "H. E.," II. xxii.)

† Γενόμενος δὲ ἐν Ῥώμῃ διαδοχὴν ἐποιήσαμεν μέχρις Ἀνικήτου. (Ibid.) See in Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," I. 270, the note on these words.

‡ Jerome has represented the writings of Hegesippus too much as a consecutive history, when he says: "Omnes a passione Domini usque ad suam ætatem ecclesiasticarum actuam texeus historias." ("De Viris Illustr.," xxii.) Eusebius only says that Hegesippus has presented in the simplest manner apostolic teaching: Τὴν ἁπλανῆ παράδοσιν τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος. (Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xxii.)

§ "Dionysius Corinthiorum ecclesiæ episcopus tantæ eloquentiæ et industriæ fuit ut non solum civitates et provinciæ populis sed et aliarum urbium et provinciarum epistolis erudiret." (Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxvii.)

dence he took the oversight of a large diocese, sending his counsels throughout Greece, Asia Minor, and Italy. "Not content," says Eusebius, "with the labours of his diocese, he generously extended his benefits to the other Churches."* Dionysius was a true member of the Church universal, a representative of real Catholicity. Such largeness of heart and breadth of charity were becoming more and more rare, while hierarchical lines of division were fast multiplying. Dionysius of Corinth was not a man of great intellect; his letters indicate a certain amount of credulity. For example, he accepts without examination an absurd legend current in Corinth, according to which that Church owed its foundation to the united efforts of Peter and Paul.† He exhibits no great learning nor force of argument, but all the fragments of his writings which remain, are full of benevolence; they breathe the spirit of primitive times, the spirit of living Christian unity. This atones for many errors. Dionysius of Corinth pleads that a helping hand be held out to Christians who have fallen and are repentant; he wisely counsels Pinytus, Bishop of the Church of Pontus, who seems to have been an ardent follower after imaginary perfection, not to push the practice of asceticism to extremes, because of the weakness of the flesh.‡

* Ὡς τῆς ἐνθέου φιλοπονίας οὐ μόνον τοῖς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ τῆς ἀλλοδαπῆς ἀφθόνως ἐκοινώνει. (Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xxiii.) The list of his letters is given in Eusebius.

† Eusebius, "H. E.," II. xxv.

‡ Μὴ βαρὺ φὸρτίον τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐπιτιθέναι. (Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xxiii.) Pinytus expresses the desire, in his reply to Dionysius, that the latter would not content himself with offering the milk of children to the Christian people, but would give them also the strong meat. It is easy to understand his meaning.

At the same time, Athenagoras the apologist was living in Athens. In Asia Minor we find several influential bishops, almost all engaged in the conflict with heresy, and in the determination of the date of the Easter festival. First among these is Apollinaris, Bishop of Hieropolis, who is already known to us by his Apology, and who endeavours to crush the nascent heresy of Montanus.* He wrote two books against the Jews, and a treatise on the Easter festival. He was a man of strong and cultivated mind, and pleaded the cause of the Church with wisdom and dignity. Theodoret said of him subsequently, that he was versed in all sacred and profane literature.† Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, displayed a zeal equal to that of Apollinaris, in the polemics against heresy, and in the defence of Christianity. His book "To Antolicus" is a philosophical apology for the new religion, too deeply tinged with Platonism. He wrote a treatise against Marcion. He is also known by his commentaries upon Scripture.‡ Serapion, who presided after him over the Church of Antioch, was distinguished in the controversy against Montanism.§ We may mention also Philip, Bishop of Crete, who, as well as Modestus, engaged in controversy with Marcion; Rhodo, at first a disciple of Tatian, afterwards an opponent of Gnosticism; Musanus, known for his refutation of the heresy of the Encratites; Apollonius, whose writings against the Montanists were afterwards refuted by Tertullian.‖ The most

* St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxiv.; Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xxvii. † Theodoret, "Hæretic Fabul. Compend.," III. ii.

‡ Eusebius, "H. E.," IV. xxiv.; St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxv. § Ibid., xlvii.

‖ Ibid., xxx. xxxi. xxxii. xxxvii. xl.

eminent bishop of Asia Minor at this period was Melito of Sardis, apologist and theologian. St. Jerome extols his eloquence.* He took part in all the controversies, and treated of all the great questions of his day. He defended Christianity against the calumnies of the people and the sophistries of the philosophers; in opposition to Marcion, he established the dogma of the Incarnation, and maintained the oriental practice in the celebration of Easter. To judge by the title of one of his works, "The Key," he appears to have lent the force of his example to the symbolical exegesis, for which Christian antiquity had so decided a taste. But his especial study was prophecy. Not satisfied with making known the life of the great prophets, he also wrote a commentary on the Revelation, full of ardent anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ.† Melito carried a generous enthusiasm into all he said and did. Thus, he did not hesitate to undertake a long journey in Palestine to acquire information as to the canonicity of the Old Testament. He was an extreme ascetic, and Polycarp called him

* "Hujus elegans et declamatorium ingenium." St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxii.

† The list of his various works (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxv., and Eusebius, "H. E.," V. xxiv.) shows the variety of his studies. Beside his "Apology," he is known as the author of the following books: "A Treatise upon Easter," "De Sensibus," "De die Dominica," "De Fide," "De Plasmate," "De Anima et Corpere," "De Baptismo," "De Veritate," "De Generatione Christi," "De Ecclesia," "De Philoxenia," "De Vita Prophetarum," "De Prophetia," "De Apocalypse," "Clavis." The reproduction which the "Spicilegium Solemnense" pretends to give of this last work (Vols. III. and IV.) has no character of authenticity. It is an apocryphal compilation. The fragments of the writings of Melito are collected in Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," I. 119.

the Eunuch Melito, alluding no doubt to those who, the Gospel says, have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God's sake.* "He did all," says Polycarp again, "under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, and the Church recognised in him a true prophet."† We can well understand the lively admiration felt by the Church for a bishop who had defended it against both paganism and heresy, and who, without deviating from the straight road of orthodoxy, yet gratified the favourite tendencies of the Church, by the ascetic severity of his life, the subtlety of his symbolism, and the oriental tone of his prophetic teachings.

The Church of Asia had also at this period a bishop of great eminence. This was Polycrates of Ephesus, who wrote at the close of the second century a powerful letter to Victor, in which he conveys the positive decision arrived at by the bishops of Asia Minor, assembled at Cæsarea, to adhere to the oriental practice in the observance of Easter.‡

We have already spoken of Justin Martyr as the firm and eloquent advocate of Christianity with the emperors.§ Let us now endeavour to sketch the features of his moral character as manifested in his life.

Justin was born, in the year 103, at Nicopolis, of a

* Eusebius, "H. E.," V. xxiv.

† *Τὸν ἐν ἁγίῳ πνεύματι πάντα πολιτευσάμενον.* (Ibid.) "Tertullianus dicit eum a plerisque nostrorum prophetam putari." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxiv.)

‡ St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xlv.; Eusebius, "H. E.," V. xxii.

§ See Eusebius on Justin ("H. E.," IV. xvi; St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxiii.) The details of his conversion are contained in the Introduction to his "Dial. cum Tryph." In addition to the Church historians already mentioned, we shall quote Semisch's "Monograph," 1850.

pagan family, which had probably emigrated from Greece into Samaria, at the commencement of the second century. He was thus placed from his cradle midway between Judaism and Paganism, both of which he was in turn victoriously to combat. He seems to have possessed some private fortune, which enabled him to undertake numerous journeys. He was completely the man of his age, familiar with all its troubles and sufferings, though escaping its corruption. He represented its best aspirations, free from the impure admixture which elsewhere stifled or alloyed them. The dreary void left in the world by the dethroned gods, whose place was still unfilled; the restless disquiet of heart, the craving after truth, while truth seemed to flee before the seeker like the mirage of the desert sand,—all these characteristic traits of the crisis of the age were found in this young oriental Greek, whose earnest, impassioned soul proudly rejected the base allurements of a brilliant and corrupt state of society, the luxury of which was equalled by its licentiousness. He was as much a stranger to vulgar ambition as to sensual gratifications. No frequenter of the forum, of camps or of palaces, he had early assumed the mantle of the philosopher, and set before him as his aim, the acquisition of truth. This he was resolved to seek till he should find, and if need be to travel over the whole world in his search. In this age of universal eclecticism, all the old schools had their representatives, and it was possible in a few years to pursue the whole course marked out by centuries of human thought. Justin pursued unwearyingly this toilsome pilgrimage, which, apart from the Gospel, led to neither resting-place nor goal. He has described

with eloquent simplicity this troubled period of his life, in which each new effort ended only in deeper disappointment. His first halting-place was the Stoical school, which by its austerity was wont to attract to itself lofty and noble spirits; but had he become a full disciple of this school, he must have renounced the great problems of philosophy, which were forbidden to its alumni as a puerile amusement. Beneath this proud pretension there lurked, in truth, an unworthy surrender of the powers of thought. The young Greek, whose soul was burning to comprehend the deep things of metaphysics, soon turned away from these masters, who hid their impotence under a veil of scorn, and turned to the Peripatetics. In the teacher to whom he thus addressed himself, however, he found one who sought lucre rather than true learning, and professed philosophy for the sake of the honorarium it brought. Nothing could be more irritating than such a discovery to a mind like Justin's, seeking the pure ideal, and he broke away at once from the Peripatetics. At this period the ancient Pythagorean school was in great repute, owing to its oriental mysticism, which harmonised with the then predominant current of thought. Justin came up to this door and knocked; but while Plato had been content with inscribing over the portal of his school, "None but a geometrician may enter here," the Pythagorean demanded, as the condition of entrance, not only a perfect acquaintance with geometry, but also with music and astronomy. Justin Martyr was not a man of simply curious mind, he had a soul hungering and thirsting after light and truth. Such an initiation as was thus demanded, would have required a lifetime of labour; and a know-

ledge of the stars and of musical measures seemed to him of secondary importance, compared with that which he longed to know. To gain it would be to spend life in the porch of the Temple, without ever entering the holy place. In following next the steps of the Platonist school, Justin thought that he had at length crossed the sacred threshold. He was entranced with the contemplation of the ideal world presented to him; he seemed to have found wings with which to soar above himself. But this ideal world was a cold region of pure intellect, whose pallid gleam, struggling with shadows, could not warm the heart or change the life. Once again Justin turned away baffled. He had already some vague notions of the truth of Christianity. He tells us in his second "Apology" of the deep impression produced upon him by the sight of the martyrs. He says: "At the time when I was delighting in the doctrines of Plato, and even while I was listening to the calumnies cast upon the Christians, I said to myself, as I saw them so dauntless in death and in the midst of perils which the world esteems so terrible, that it was impossible they should be men living in lust and crime."* This heart-stirring spectacle had prepared him to receive the call of God.

Seeking solitude, that he might meditate with a mind more disengaged from outward things, he was walking one day by the side of a lake in his own country, when he met an aged man, whose countenance was full of gravity and sweetness. He looked like a philosopher, but one who had found peace in his philosophy. They

* Ὁρῶν ἀφόβους πρὸς θάνατον ἐνενόουν ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἐν κακίᾳ καὶ φιληδονίᾳ. (Justin, "Opera," 50.)

entered naturally into conversation. The old man could read in Justin's face the feeling with which his heart was filled—the unslaked thirst after truth. He skilfully touched the vulnerable point, by showing the young man that his philosophy had no influence on his moral life, and still left him a prey to the most agonising uncertainty on the gravest problems. "Where, then," exclaimed Justin, "is the truth to be found, if not among the philosophers?" "Long before the philosophers," the old man replied, "there lived in the olden times happy and righteous men, the friends of God; they spoke by His Spirit; they were called prophets; they told to men that which they had heard and learned from the Holy Spirit; they worshipped God, the Creator and Father of all creatures; they adored His Son Jesus Christ. Ask thou that the gates of light may be opened to thee now."* This had been Justin's one desire from his youth up; the old man had shown him in what direction to look for the opening of those gates of light. Having listened to the philosophers, he now turns to the prophets and to Him who is as far above the greatest of the prophets, as the heaven is above the earth—the Eternal Word, of whom he will be henceforward the full and faithful witness.

The conversion of Justin was the consummation of a long inward struggle. He did not feel himself bound as a Christian, to overturn the ladder by which he had painfully climbed to the footstool of the truth. He always regarded Platonism as a preparation of the heathen world for Christianity, and he read the history of humanity in the light of his own personal experience.

* Justin, "Opera," 225.

He knew that before he became acquainted with the true, living Christ, through the medium of revelation, he had been led to yearn after Him by his studies in philosophy, and yet more by the deepest needs of his own heart and mind. The Word did not come like a stranger to him; a dim prophetic dawn had filled his soul, before the sun shone forth upon him in its strength; and the fulness of the noontide light did not make him despise the early glimmerings of the day. Persuaded that the same aspirations might lead to the same results in others, he was ever anxious to appeal to these secret yearnings, to this latent fragmentary form of Christianity, which needed only the completion which the Gospel brought, in order to lead his contemporaries to the foot of the Cross. Justin, as a Christian, did not therefore cease to respect philosophy, and in order to make it patent to all that in becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, he had not abandoned the quest and love of wisdom, but on the contrary had had revealed to him the highest wisdom, he still wore the mantle of the philosopher. He did so from no desire to escape the honourable reproach of the disciples of Jesus Christ. "I have cast aside," he says, "all the vain desires of men, I glory now only in being a Christian, and there is nothing I so much desire as to appear as a Christian in the face of the world."* Henceforward, the entire life of Justin will be one ardent apostolate; a lay apostolate indeed, resting on no other authority than that conferred by his own zeal and fervent convictions, but none the less real.† His long and earnest

* Χριστιανὸς εὑρεθῆναι καὶ εὐχόμενος. (Justin, "Opera," 51.

† Lenain de Tillemont ("Mémoires," II. 389) assumes, without any sort of reason, that Justin was a priest of the Church of Rome.

pursuit of truth made him esteem it at its true value; he had experienced all the mental struggles of his contemporaries, and thus knowing at once the sickness and the remedy, he was admirably prepared to be an effective missionary—one of those true comforters, who have learned by their own experience of suffering how to solace others. He never lost for a single day the sense of the deep responsibility resting on the witness of the truth. He felt this equally in regard to Jews, pagans, and heretics. While acknowledging that nothing was more difficult to overcome than the obstinacy of the adherents of the synagogue, he thus addressed them: "I know that, as the Word of God has said, this great wisdom is hidden from your eyes. It is in compassion for you that I feel constrained, cost me what it may, to plead with you to believe these Divine paradoxes, that I may at least be found guiltless in the day of judgment."* "The fear of the judgment of God," he says again, "makes me not cease to confer with the men of your nation, to see if I may not find some one among you, who may be saved by the grace of the Lord of hosts."† "I must tell you, without flattery or disguise, all that I think. Has not the Lord said, 'The sower went forth to sow'? I must needs speak in the hope that some word may fall like seed into good ground;‡ for the Lord, when He comes again in power and great glory, will call every one to account for that which he has received."§ Justin declared again and again

* *Συμπαθῶν ὑμῖν.* (Justin, "Opera," 256.)
† Ibid., 249.
‡ *Ἐλπίδι οὖν τοῦ εἶναί που καλὴν γῆν, λέγειν δεῖ.* (Ibid., 354.)
§ Justin, "Opera," 51-56.

in his "Apology" that he should hold himself guilty of the ignorance of the pagans, if he did not do all in his power to dispel it. He felt an equal responsibility with regard to the heretics. "Hence it is," he says, "that we seek every opportunity to confer with you." He epitomises all that he feels on this subject in this noble utterance: "Every man who can bear witness to the truth, and does it not, will be judged of God."*

Faithful to his convictions, Justin never for a day relaxed his efforts to spread the faith. We have seen with how much dignity in his two Apologies he defends the Church before the emperors. Not content with this public and striking testimony, he has repeated conferences with the Jews and pagans wherever he meets them, and as the time for pronouncing summary anathemas has not yet come, he employs the same means with the heretics. In these discussions he exhibits great patience and firmness; it is evident that he is always actuated by the purest motives. He appears to have travelled much. We find him at Ephesus, where his famous interview with the Jew Trypho took place, the memory of which he has preserved to us in writing. Again we see him at Rome, opposing a false philosopher named Crescens, connected with the sect of the Cynics. Such courageous fidelity deserved to be owned and recompensed; this apostolic man was to wear the crown of an apostle. Already, in his second Apology, Justin Martyr expresses his foreboding of his approach-

* Εἴδότες ὅτι πᾶς ὁ δυνάμενος λέγειν τὸ ἀληθὲς καὶ μὴ λέγων κριθήσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ. (Justin, "Opera," 308.)

ing end. "I expect," he says, "to be taken in the toils of these false philosophers, and to suffer a death of ignominy, perhaps at the instigation of Crescens, who better deserves to be called the friend of fame and of luxury, than the friend of wisdom. He publicly charges the Christians with atheism and impiety, and that without any evidence, and merely to gratify the prejudices of the people."* Justin tells us that he had in public closed Crescens' mouth. The latter, in his anger, sought to avenge himself as a man of such a disposition and of such a school would naturally do; and it was probably on his denunciation that Justin was thrown into prison. He appeared with some fellow Christians before the tribunal of the prefect of the city. Strangely enough, this magistrate was a philosopher of the Stoics—Rusticus, one of the instructors of Marcus Aurelius. The two doctrines were brought face to face, the one seated on the judgment-seat, the other at the bar. The unworthy spirit manifested by the pagan philosophers under such circumstances, is peculiarly marked in the case of Justin. He was, as he had always been, dignified and firm, without bravado. He plainly confessed the great philosophy of Christ, in which, after such long and weary seeking, he had found rest at last. When asked to define this philosophy, he expressed, in a few forcible words, his faith in the God of heaven and earth, and in His Son, "the Master of truth," adding humbly, "that he was too unworthy to say anything worthy of Him." The prefect, interspersing his interrogatory with jocose raillery, asked

* *Κἀγὼ οὖν προσδοκῶ ἐπιβουλευθῆναι καὶ ξύλῳ ἐμπαγῆναι.* (Justin, "Opera," 46.)

Justin if he supposed he would ascend into heaven when his head was cut off. "I know it," he said; "yes, beyond all power to doubt, I know it." When he was urged to offer sacrifice, he replied, "Our great desire is to suffer for Christ; for that will give us confidence before His awful judgment-seat, at the bar of which the whole world will have to stand." The sentence was pronounced and executed the same day.* Thus died Justin, rightly surnamed by the ancient Church, "Justin the Martyr;" for the truth never had a witness more disinterested, more courageous, more worthy of the hatred of a godless age and of the approval of Heaven. The largeness of his heart and mind equalled the fervour of his zeal, and both were based on his Christian charity. Justin derived all his eloquence from his heart; his natural genius was not of rare order, but the experiences of his early life, illumined by revelation, became the source of much fruitful suggestion for himself, and gave to the Church a heritage of thought, which, ripened and developed at Alexandria, was to become the basis of the great apology of Christianity. If we except the beautiful doctrine of the Word *germinally present in every man*, there was little originality in Justin's theological ideas. In exegesis he is subtle, and sometimes puerile; in argument he flags, but where his heart speaks, he stands forth in all his moral greatness, and his earnest, generous words, are ever quick and telling. Had he remained a pagan he would have lived unnoted in erudite mediocrity. Christianity fired and

* Ruinart, "Acta Martyrum Sincera." The details of the narrative correspond with all that is known of Justin.

fertilised his genius, and it is the glowing soul which we chiefly love to trace in all his writings.†

While Justin Martyr represented the speculative tendencies of the Eastern Church in their period of formation, Irenæus occupies an intermediate position between the East and West, and in a manner unites the two. Born in Asia Minor in the year 140, he passed the greater part of his life in Central Gaul. He writes in Greek, and thinks often like a Roman. Essentially moderate in his mode of thought, he tones down, so as to conciliate them, tendencies which seemed directly opposed. An earnest apostle of ecclesiastical unity, he laboured effectually to realise his idea, by drawing together lines which had hitherto seemed divergent, and fusing, as it were, into one comprehensive system of doctrine, all the main elements of the Christian thought of his day. Hence the large influence which he exercised during his life, and which only went on increasing after his death. Irenæus was equally removed from the speculative boldness of many of the Fathers of the following

† Many authentic writings of Justin's have been lost. We cite the following: 1st, his book "On all Heresies;" 2nd, "On Marcion" (Irenæus, "Contra Hæres.," IV. xiv.); 3rd, "Περὶ ψυχῆς;" 4th, "A Sermon to the Greeks," and a book, the subject of which is unintelligible, entitled "Ψάλτης." (Eusebius, "H. E.," III. xviii.) The authentic writings which have been preserved, are: 1st, the two "Apologies;" 2nd, "The Dialogue with Grappho." The "Letter to Diognetes" and the "Λόγος πρὸς Ἕλληνας," have been falsely attributed to him. The fundamental ideas and the style of these works are unlike those of Justin. Cureton has discovered the name of the author of the Λόγος. The Λόγος παραινετικός is in flagrant contradiction with Justin's views as to the preparatory purpose fulfilled by the ancient systems of philosophy. The treatise "On the Resurrection" is equally wanting in authenticity; the style has a correctness and rhetorical effect unlike Justin. Finally, the treatise on "The Unity of God" is a mere compilation from heathen authors.

age, and from the narrow and passionate realism of Tertullian. He was peculiarly distinguished by the harmony and equilibrium of his spirit. Such as he was as a theologian he was also as a bishop, and he showed as much moderation and wisdom in the direction of souls as in the discussion of doctrines. His calm and gentle piety is reflected in his writings. All these qualities, illuminated and idealised in the memory of the Church by a glorious death, assured to Irenæus an influence exceptionally broad and lasting. He was unanimously considered to be the greatest bishop of the second century, and the representative of the catholicity of the day. He contributed to strengthen the hierarchical system by his love of order and of tradition, but the best service he rendered it was in constraining it to moderate its premature pretensions.

Irenæus passed his youth in Asia Minor, at a time when the memory of the apostolic age was still vivid. His master was Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, and their intercourse, as he himself tells us in a passage we have already quoted,* left a deep impression upon Irenæus. He was never weary of listening to the words of the beloved disciple, as they were recalled by the pious Bishop of Smyrna. We find also, from various allusions in his book, "Contra Hæres.," that he was brought into contact with several men of the generation which had seen and listened to the apostles. Thus, treading a soil watered and fertilised by the tears and travail of the first witnesses of the truth, living in the midst of the Churches founded by them, close to the very cradle of Christianity, listening to the narratives

* Eusebius, "H. E.," V. xx.

of Polycarp with the glowing imagination of youth and the tender emotion of a loving heart, the glorious past became to the young Irenæus a living reality, which he beheld through the medium of his own impressions. A man thus filled with a great enthusiasm could not be a critic; he became the eager recipient of all tradition. Thus, while he merits the highest confidence as a disciple of Polycarp, it must be admitted that on minor points, he is sometimes the echo of a tradition already more or less legendary. But the most important result of these days, passed under such happy auspices in Smyrna, was an exaggerated estimate formed in the mind of Irenæus, of oral tradition, to which he was disposed to attach sovereign authority in the Church. He raised to the height of a universal rule the favoured experiences of his own youth, forgetting that Christians would not always be able to sit at the feet of a disciple of John, and that as the distance widened between the stream of tradition and its source, its waters would become less and less pure. It is evident from the writings of Irenæus that he did not confine himself to gathering up the memories of the Church, but that he also studied carefully the old pagan literature. For such studies he was very favourably placed, for the higher culture of Greece had, next to Alexandria, no more brilliant school than in the cities of Asia Minor. Subsequently Irenæus turned his vast knowledge to account in his controversy with Gnosticism, the obscure beginnings of which in his own country he was able to trace. He was still young when he came into Gaul. In order to account for this journey, it is not necessary to suppose, as Gregory of Tours has done, an official

commission given by Polycarp to Irenæus.* The bond between the various Churches was very close, and especially so between Gaul and Asia Minor, through the relations of commerce. Irenæus, immediately on his arrival at Lyons, was made one of the elders of the Church of that city, and became, in fact, through the confidence placed in him by the old Bishop Pothinus, its director and head. The times were searching: persecution was raging with extraordinary fury, and the East had not only sent into Gaul some strong Christians like Irenæus, it had also sent heretics, who were the more dangerous that they were scarcely suspected, and might catch the Gauls unawares in the simplicity of their faith. Irenæus, under these circumstances, exerted a most happy influence. We have a striking proof of the confidence which he inspired, in the letter of which the Church of Lyons made him the bearer to Rome. They wrote to the Bishop of that city: "We have prayed our brother and colleague Irenæus to bear to thee these letters. We commend him to thee as a devoted servant of the testament of Christ."†

The journey undertaken by Irenæus had a twofold object. He was first to appeal to the sympathy of the Christians on behalf of the much-suffering martyrs of Lyons, and next to convey and uphold their opinion on one of the questions then most deeply agitating the Church.‡ This was the heresy of Montanus, who had gained

* Gregory of Tours, "Hist. Franc.," I.

† Ζηλώτην ὄντα τῆς διαθήκης τοῦ Χριστοῦ. (Eusebius, "H E.," V. iv.)

‡ St. Jerome ("De Viris Illustr.," xxxv.) thus explains the journey of Irenæus: "Ob quasdam Ecclesiæ questiones legatus Romam missus est."

many adherents at Lyons as in Italy. The Montanists had not as yet broken with the orthodox Church, and meanwhile they were calling forth hot discussions among the Christians. It seems that at Rome the Church was fluctuating between fatal compliance and futile severity. The Christians of Lyons desired to make known their decided opinion to the bishop, who, according to Tertullian, had fallen to some extent under the influence of Montanism.* Their counsel seems to have been both wise and moderate, and no more fit messenger could have been found to convey it than Irenæus, the apostle of conciliation, who had, so to speak, beheld the very birth of Montanism.† We do not know precisely what was the result of his mission. It is certain, however, that he fulfilled it with much zeal. The Church of Rome was a very important one in the view of Irenæus, not as the centre of a hierarchy which had in truth no existence, but as an apostolic Church and the focus of primitive tradition in the West.‡ It was of the first moment to Irenæus, viewing tradition as he did, that there should be no extinction or obscuration of a light, designed to enlighten a multitude of Churches, which could not have recourse to the other

* Tertullian, "Adv. Praxeam," i.

† See the whole account given by Eusebius of this mission ("H. E.," V. iii. iv). He thus characterises the letter of the Christians of Lyons: *Εὐλαβῆ καὶ ὀρθοδοξοτάτην.* This letter was therefore at once benevolent and orthodox, which leads us to suppose that he sought to deprecate on the one hand extreme severity, and on the other, sinful connivance at heresy in the Church of Rome.

‡ A careful perusal of the famous passage on the "Principalitas" of the Roman Church ("Contra Hæres.," III. iii.) will suffice to show that Irenæus had no other idea than that of cherishing the work and memory of the Apostles.

centres of apostolic teaching, since these were all in the East. His sojourn at Rome was not without influence on his own mental development. His circle of ideas and of experience widened; he became better acquainted with various heresies, which he met with in the metropolis of the empire. Probably also his love of tradition strengthened, as it fed on all the memorials, more or less authentic, treasured up of the great apostles who had preached in Rome.

When he returned to Lyons, the aged Bishop Pothinus was dead, and the Church itself was decimated by persecution. A firm hand was needed to steer the vessel through the terrible storm still muttering thunder. Irenæus had already been designated for the bishopric, and he accepted it with joy in the day of danger. To do so, was to prepare himself for martyrdom. After the fearful persecution under Marcus Aurelius, some respite was granted to the Church, and it reaped the glorious fruits of the bloody seed-sowing of the previous years. A crowd of neophytes thronged to its gates. According to Gregory of Tours, Irenæus carried the Gospel to the greater part of the inhabitants of Lyons.* These days of tranquillity were not all gain to the truth. Heresy, too, was busy in the work of perversion. The facility of communication between Gaul and Asia Minor, had led to Lyons some of those false teachers who were the crafty ministers of error, and who crept unawares into the Church. Irenæus has given us a striking picture of them. He shows us the heretics insinuating themselves into families, and, under a mask of orthodoxy, using all means to subvert the faith,

* Gregory of Tours, "Hist. Franc.," I. 29.

gaining an influence over the susceptible minds of some, and flattering the pride of all. Similar attempts at perversion were made at this time through the entire Church. The pious bishop sought to oppose error by unmasking it, and in the year 180 he wrote his book "Against Heresies," to which we shall have to make constant reference, when we come to our exposition of orthodox doctrine in the second century.* For the present, we shall only give an outline of its general character. Written in a bold and simple style, this book faithfully reflects the soul of Irenæus. It exhibits neither the philosophic boldness of Alexandria, nor the fierce fervour of Carthage. The author invariably pursues that middle track, which it was his nature to prefer. Tradition fills a large place in this work, and is appealed to as the paramount rule of faith. This book contributed more than any other theological work of the times, to establish the ecclesiastical authority, not upon a monarchical basis such as it subsequently received, but upon the principles of a sort of episcopal aristocracy. Irenæus displays throughout his unfailing moderation; he discusses rather than condemns; he does not thunder anathemas on every page, as is too commonly done by the champions of orthodoxy. We feel that while he holds error in hearty detestation, he is full of compassion for the heretics. He expresses this pity very nobly in the following passage: "If we

* The book "Contra Hæres." cannot have been written before the year 172, since mention is made in it of Tatian (I. xxviii.) It carries the list of Roman bishops down to Eleutherus, and mentions the Montanists. The Greek text has been in great part lost; but the Latin translation is very ancient, since it is certainly cited by Tertullian. ("Contra Valentin.," xxxix.)

publish their errors, they themselves confirm them, teach them, and boast of them. We, for our part, entreat them not to remain longer in the ditch they have made for themselves with their own hands, and to forsake those shades of darkness, so that, coming into the Church of God, they may be born to the true life; that Jesus Christ may be formed in them, and that they may know the Creator and Governor of the universe, the only true God and Lord over all. This is our desire for them, and we love them better than they love themselves. The love we bear to them is sincere, and it will be well for them if they respond to it, for it is like a bitter medicine designed to cleanse and heal. Therefore, while multiplying our efforts for their conversion, we never cease to hold out to them friendly hands."*

The plan of the great work of Irenæus, which is divided into five books, is very simple. The author himself indicates, in the preface to his third book, the plan of the first three. He commences by describing the proceedings of the heretics, then he gives a complete exposition of their doctrines and of their life. The second book is a detailed refutation of their errors; the third resumes the refutation from a Scriptural point of view, by quotations of the sacred text. The two last books refer especially to the words of Christ and of the Apostles. Happy age in which, instead of seeking to repress heresy by proscription and violence, the Church combated it with the lawful weapons

* "Hæc precamur de illis, utilius eos diligentes, quam ipsa semet ipsos putant diligeri. Manum porrigere eis non tædebit nos." (Irenæus "Contra Hæres.," III. xlvi.)

of earnest and thoughtful discussion! The letter to the heretic Florinus, preserved to us by Eusebius, and containing the precious fragment about Polycarp, is written from the same stand-point as the book against heresy.*

If the great Bishop of Lyons showed himself a zealous defender of the episcopate and of tradition, he did not in any way recognise the primacy of one bishop over the rest, nor anything like the false and mechanical unity constituted by decrees proceeding from Rome. In the controversy raised about the celebration of Easter, he maintained, in opposition to Bishop Victor, the rights of Christian freedom. While approving the practice of the West, he strongly opposed the sentence of excommunication pronounced by the Bishop of Rome upon the bishops of Asia Minor; and he gained for his opinion the weight of a synodal decision, passed at Lyons in an assembly of the bishops of Gaul.† It seems that this step taken by Irenæus had all the success desired, for in the next century Firmilianus affirmed that peace had been preserved in the Church until the episcopate of Stephen.‡ This assertion proves that the troubles in the time of Victor had been speedily quieted.

According to Gregory of Tours, Irenæus suffered martyrdom under Severus, in the year 197.§ He left

* Eusebius, "H. E.," V. xx. † See Irenæus' letter. (Ibid., xxiv.)

‡ See Cyprian, "Epist." lxxv. St. Jerome ("De Viris Illustr.," xxxi.) quotes other writings of Irenæus: 1st, "Contra Gentes," volumen breve; 2nd, "De Disciplina," aliud; 3rd, "Ad Martionum fratrem de apostolica prædicatione;" 4th, librum, "Vanorum Tractatuum;" 5th, "Ad Blastum de Schismate;" 6th, "De ogdoade." We have already quoted the well-known fragment of Pfaff.

§ "Hist. Franc.," I. 27.

a memory respected by all, and his influence went on augmenting after his death, in many respects for the good of the Church, but also to the detriment of her liberty; for he had laid down principles, which in their ultimate consequences would tend to establish that very hierarchy, the early pretensions of which he had so earnestly sought to keep in subjection.

CHAPTER II.

THE FATHERS OF THE EASTERN CHURCH, FROM THE END OF THE SECOND CENTURY TO THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE.*

§ I. *The Ecclesiastical Writers in Asia Minor, Greece, and Egypt, until Origen.*

THE period of great outward sufferings was also to the Church a time of much inward struggle. This era in her history is characterised by a wide extension of thought in all directions, a large development of doctrinal and ecclesiastical life. Persecutions raged without, heresy grew within; perils of all kinds seemed to threaten at once, and problems of gravest moment sought, or rather demanded, solution. The Church, in the midst of conflict and suffering, was constrained to give attention to the momentous questions of doctrine and discipline which arose, and to organise the religious community, while the axe was all the time suspended over its head.

It will be our task to follow through all its phases

* The books of reference are: the writings of the Fathers, and Routh's "Reliq. Sacræ," III. IV., for those whose works are lost; Eusebius, VI. and VII. of his history; St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustribus;" Anastasius, "Liber Pontificalis." We may cite also the following: "Mémoires" of Lenain de Tillemont, IV.; Bœhringer, "Die Kirche Christi und ihre Zeugen," I.; Hergog's "Encyclopædia;" and various monographs which will be given as they occur.

this process of development, from which resulted a Church admirable in many respects, but very different from the Church as we have seen it in the apostolic age. For the present we shall endeavour, not so much to enter into the conflicts of dogma, as to sketch the figures of the combatants engaged, and to make them move and speak before us in their true characters. We shall defer any methodical exposition of systems, while we try to bring into relief the man, rather than the theologian, in each of the Fathers of this period. We must ever bear in mind, that if the Church of this age prepared the way for the triumph of the hierarchy, it did not itself come under the yoke; that it still enjoyed a time of true liberty, in which the unity of the faith laid no fetters upon diversity of opinion and free inquiry. There were still broad lines of distinction between East and West, and no necessity was felt for effacing these distinctions, or enforcing the adoption of one uniform symbol of the faith. Full scope was given for the various individualities, which found bold and broad expression within the Church. External restraint only tends to add force to that reaction of thought and feeling, which is the sublime vindication of the liberty of the soul under any despotism whatsoever. The martyr-theologians of the third century are not the faded copies of one and the same doctrinal type, forcibly impressed upon the mind by a mechanical process. All acknowledging with equal reverence the authority of the Divine Master, they have no hesitation in preserving intact the independence of Christian thought; they move at liberty within a broad area of doctrine, from which nothing is excluded but avowed heresy.

We need not marvel that in the midst of the perils of persecution, and the countless claims of missionary life, they should have displayed so great intellectual activity. That activity gathers strength from that which seems to restrain it: it is stimulated alike by the noble endurance which elevates the moral being, by the vile calumnies which a blameless life must repudiate, and by the subtleties of heresy which its true genius must unmask. The sophists, who seek to live by their doctrine, succumb in the hour of trial; the same principle holds good of the apostles of the truth; and they are never so full of the spirit of inspiration as when they are ready to die for the truth. In the dungeon and at the stake, Christian thought found wings for its highest flight.

The most active centre of Christianity at this period, must not be sought in the countries where it was cradled. There it became consolidated and externally developed, as we have shown, but the predominant influence was exerted elsewhere. From the great cities of Alexandria, Rome, and Carthage, proceeds the ruling spirit of the Church; and if Cæsarea sheds forth a brief but brilliant gleam, it is indebted for it to the presence of Origen, the great exile of the Egyptian Church. Asia Minor supplies only a few names of distinction, and these are lustreless compared with those which illuminate the Churches of Africa and Italy. The question of the right date for the celebration of Easter, sufficed for a long time to occupy the minds of these bishops, who had neither the speculative genius of Alexandria, nor the aptitude for command of the Roman Church. The See of Jerusalem was filled, at the close

of the second and commencement of the third centuries, by Narcissus, a man of austere piety, verging on asceticism. Vilely slandered by treacherous enemies, he gave no reply but silence, and during long years withdrew himself into the desert. A legend, which must be of great antiquity, since Eusebius repeats it, ascribes to him numerous miracles, but they so closely resemble those of the apocryphal gospels, that we can only hold them to be also apocryphal. The long retirement of a man placed at the head of one of the most important Churches, would no doubt impress the imagination of the Christian community, and we know that no soil has been more fertile in myth and legend than the sand of the deserts, in which pious solitaries sought a refuge from the world and sin.* When more than a hundred years old, Narcissus returned to Jerusalem, and joined Alexander to himself in the episcopate. Alexander had been for a long time the director of a Church in Cappadocia, and had come to Palestine to visit the holy places. The two bishops were led to the step thus taken by a two-fold revelation.† Alexander wrote several letters to his colleagues in the episcopate. He had with him, for some time, Clement of Alexandria, and the esteem in which he held him, showed that he was a man of breadth and generous spirit.‡ He was cast into prison in the persecution under Decius, and died the death of the confessors.§ The Church of Cæsarea, which was to claim the honour of receiving the exiled Origen and his school, was directed under Severus by the

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. x.
† *Κατὰ αποκάλυψιν νύκτωρ.* (Ibid., xi.)
‡ Ibid.
§ St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxii.

Bishop Theophilus, who took a leading part in the discussion of the Easter question, and exercised a great influence in the synod held in reference to it.* Antioch, one of the metropolitan Churches of Asia, had at its head, at the close of the reign of Commodus and the commencement of that of Severus, the Bishop Serapion, who distinguished himself by his numerous writings directed against Montanism and Judaism.†

The Greek Church does not appear to have taken any place of importance during this period. It had neither great bishops nor illustrious teachers. Athens was totally eclipsed by Alexandria. The Church of Corinth, which had once shown itself so easily agitated by troubles revealing a strong though often ill-directed life, was in a state of such complete repose that history passes it by in silence. One only of its bishops was an exception to the general obscurity — Bacchylus, who lived in the time of Severus, and who was held in high veneration by his Achaian colleagues. He wrote on the Easter question.‡ We shall confine ourselves to enumerating the names of those teachers or bishops, whose works are known either by their titles or by some extant fragments. Heraclitus, who, in the time of Severus, wrote a commentary on Paul's Epistles;§ Maximus, who discussed the question of the origin of evil; Candidus and Appion, who wrote on the six days of creation; ‖ Sextus, author of a book on the resurrection; Arabianus, whose name alone has survived; and

* St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xliii.
† Ibid., xli.; Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xii.
‡ Ibid. xliv. § Ibid., xlvi. ‖ Ibid., xlvi-xlix.

Jude, who, in a commentary on the seventy weeks of Daniel, made out a complete chronology of the Church, from its foundation to the time of Severus, and proclaimed the approaching advent of Antichrist.* The mere titles of these works give sufficient proof that the minds of their authors were much occupied with heretical Gnosticism, and especially with the oriental dualism which characterised it; for they recur perpetually to the great problem of the origin of matter. It is evident, also, that whenever they are not stimulated by the attacks of their adversaries, their thoughts revert by preference to petty questions of chronology.

Let us now transfer our attention to the more active and brilliant centre of Christian thought, in that Church of Alexandria, of which we have more than once spoken already, but with which we must cultivate a more intimate acquaintance in the person of its most illustrious representatives. We have seen how, long before the time of Christ, the metropolis of Egypt had outrun the city of Plato, Sophocles, and Phidias. But it is to the glory of Athens, that it could no longer govern the world after it had become itself enslaved, and that it lost, with its independence, the afflatus of high art, the inspiration which produced its greatest works. Alexandria, more learned and more subtle, never rose to the heights of sublime poetry or manly eloquence, but it gathered together and fused all the elements of the old world, and created, in its own manner, a sort of universalism, vague rather than broad, in which the religions of East and West were alike deprived of their

* St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxxiii.

exclusive character, Judaism itself being made to enter into alliance with the polytheistic religions which it had so long proscribed. Born of this heterogeneous union, the Alexandrine mind rose above all national divergences; but it also rose above reality, above history, to the cloudy summits of speculation, and it was utterly wanting in the historic sense. Strong in its allegorical method, it sported with facts; and its philosophical theories were at once aspiring and unsubstantial. Attaching great significance to symbols, it gave primary importance to that first and greatest of symbols—human speech. It developed an elaborate science of language, in which the schoolman's devotion to minutiæ was combined with the subtle imagination of the mythologist. With these tendencies, it was naturally predisposed to Gnosticism, and the most fervent faith of the Christians of this school, bears the impress alike of its virtues and its defects.

Alexandria was essentially the home of letters. Men lived there for science only. At the commencement of the Christian era, it possessed two splendid scientific institutions, which cast into the shade both temples and palaces. These were the Museum and the Serapeum. The former had been instituted by the Ptolemies in the western quarter of the city. It was surrounded with porticoes and pleasure-gardens, and contained an extensive library and a hall for public debates. The Serapeum vied with the Museum in beauty of architecture and in the number of its valuable manuscripts. Such institutions do not create the scientific spirit, but they favour and foster it where it already exists. Persons from all points of the empire resorted to Alexandria

to visit them. There the Greek or Roman philosopher, wrapped in the mantle which was his official garb, encountered the Asiatic ascetic or the Jewish rabbi.* The Christian Church made many conquests among all these philosophers, gathered at Alexandria out of curiosity or from the prevailing restlessness of the age. These proselytes had intellectual needs to be satisfied, and errors to be removed. Christianity, which is to be all things to all men, proved itself as well able to rise to the height of these refined and agitated spirits, as to stoop to the comprehension of slaves and of children. It was equally adapted to reach the two extremes of human intellect—wise among the wise, simple among the simple, divine ever. The Church instituted in the brilliant capital of Egypt, a school of Christian philosophy, which could well bear comparison, in depth and in science, with the other schools, while it surpassed all in the possession of the truth. It is known under the name of the School of the Catechists. In order to form a just conception of it, we must set aside all notions of a fixed and invariable organisation. No such regular and systematic course of religious instruction was given at Alexandria, as is common in the Church of our own day. The catechumens of the early ages were carefully instructed; but the original text of the constitution of the Church at Alexandria, shows us that the primary instruction given was very simple, and bore mainly on the fundamental points of the faith. The School of the Catechists no doubt had its origin in the instruction of the catechumens, but its curriculum was subsequently much enlarged, and it embraced

* Redepenning, "Origen," I. 10, 11.

among its disciples a large number of Christians already baptised, and even some pagans. It became a veritable school of Christian philosophy and theology, or in our modern phraseology, it had a chair of divinity. It was not indeed accompanied with much outward show. The public and formal teaching of philosophy was not a part of the old traditional method. Its most illustrious masters in Greece had been content with free discussions, and its two most famous schools had derived their names from these familiar practices. The name of the Academy recalled the gardens of Academus, where the divine Plato had delivered his doctrine, and the Peripatetic school gloried in preserving in this, its habitual designation, the memory of the walks of Aristotle with his disciples. Teaching thus informally delivered, carried all the more authority; grand declamations and solemn dissertations commenced with the decline of philosophy. The first Christians remained faithful to ancient customs. The teaching of Christ was even more bold in its simplicity and in the absence of official form, than that of Socrates. It was fitting that a living truth like Christianity, the power of which lies in the strength of conviction with which it is received, should be communicated from soul to soul. The best school of theology was the house of a true Christian. Thus the faith of Polycarp was formed at the feet of St. John, and that of Irenæus at the feet of Polycarp. Justin Martyr, the Christian philosopher, gathered around him a group of attentive disciples wherever he went. The School of the Catechists at Alexandria rested upon precisely the same foundations. It did not assemble in any large building; it was not

connected with worship, nor presided over by a bishop. Founded by laymen, it differed in no outward circumstance from the ancient schools of the philosophers. Although it was recognised by the regular authorities of the Church, and although the catechists were named by its early pastors, it was free to assemble at any hour of the day in the house of the Christian teacher.* Thither resorted both men and women, and the teaching which, beside the study of the Scriptures, embraced uninspired literature and even the exposition of the various systems of ancient philosophy, was adapted to the culture of all the learners. The work was essentially one of faith and devotedness; there was no payment.†

Three great teachers of unequal merit gave importance and influence to the Church of Alexandria: Pantænus, Clement, and Origen successively reflected lustre upon it. Pantænus, probably a native of Greece,‡ early embraced the philosophy of the Portico; then, yielding to the influences of the time, he became a disciple of the Pythagorean philosophy, or rather, of the eclectic theosophy, then in so great favour.§ We have no particulars of his conversion. It is known only that as soon as he was won to the Gospel, he devoted himself entirely to its service, turning to account, for its diffusion and defence, all the knowledge

* Eusebius ("H. E.," VI. iii.) shows us the disciples of Origen assembled in his house. † Redepenning, "Origen," I. 59-69.

‡ Testimonies differ on this point. It has been asserted that Pantænus was born in Sicily, because Clement compares him to the bee of Sicily; but this is straining a metaphor. (Clement, "Strom.," I. i. § 11.)

§ Eusebius, "H. E.," V. x.: "Stoicæ sectæ philosophus." (Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxxvi.; Redepenning, "Origen," I. 65.)

which he had acquired as a master in the schools of philosophy.

At Alexandria, to which he repaired in the year 180, he found scope for his great powers. There his rich stores of learning were sure to meet with due appreciation. He was the true founder of the School of the Catechists; he raised it to the height at which it was maintained by his successors; and he appears to have been the first to conceive in all its breadth the plan of the Alexandrine apology, so admirably carried out by Clement and Origen.* There is evidence of true genius, as well as of a noble largeness of heart, in his views of the providential design to be answered by the high culture of Greece. He prepared the way for a truly philosophical and Christian survey of the history of humanity. He discerned with more clearness than Justin, the unity of the Divine plan under the diversity of nationalities and the seeming confusion of events. He appears to have possessed in large measure the gift of eloquence, for Clement, in his "Stromata," declares himself incapable of reproducing his teaching in its original beauty and elevation. "I know," he says humbly, when speaking of the "Stromata," "what is the weakness of these reflections, if I compare them with the gifted and gracious teaching I was privileged to hear."† Science, as understood by Pantænus, so

* Origen says positively that his teaching was modelled on that of Pantænus: Μιμησάμενος τὸν πρὸ ημῶν Πανταινον. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xiv.)

† Τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκεῖνο τὸ κεχαριτωμένον. (Clement, "Strom.," I. § i. 14.) Clement speaks again of the luminous and loving language of his masters, among whom Pantænus was chief. (Ibid., § ii.) "Magis viva voce Ecclesiis profuit," says Jerome ("De Viris Illustr.," xxxvi.), speaking of the same teacher.

far from petrifying the heart, quickened it into holy ardour. We see this illustrious teacher himself carrying the Gospel into the far East, thus preparing himself by a missionary life for his theological course, or perhaps breaking off such a course to go and proclaim the name of Christ to barbarous tribes, to whom it was but partially known.* Happy is the age in which scientific theology is not severed from active and militant piety, in which a man gave his whole self to the cause, and heroically carried into practice that which he eloquently taught in theory! We know that Pantænus found the Aramaic gospel of Matthew in the distant country to which he went. Some commentaries on the Scriptures, written by him, were for a time extant, which opened the way for the allegorical interpreters. Of these commentaries we possess only scattered fragments.† But he left behind him something better than his writings; he left a disciple, who was destined to surpass the master, while carrying on his work.

Titus Flavius Clement of Alexandria, thus known because of the great reputation gained by his teaching in the capital of Egypt, was probably of Greek extraction.‡ Born in the midst of paganism, he spent his

* It is difficult to determine precisely the date of this mission. Jerome ("De Viris Illustr.," xxxvi.) asserts that Pantænus was sent on his mission by the Bishop Demetrius, which would bring the date down beyond the year 190. On the other hand, Eusebius conveys the idea that he died a catechist. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. x.) We are free to suppose a temporary interruption of his teaching. † Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," I. 380, 381.

‡ See Jerome on Clement ("De Viris Illustr.," xxxviii. iii.; Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xiii.; Redepenning, "Origen," I. 73). We shall refer principally to these works.

youth, like so many other distinguished spirits of his day, in active and ardent researches after truth. He travelled far and wide, and never paused in his passionate pursuit till, in his own words, he found rest in the bosom of the Word of the eternal truth. Deeming nothing worthy of note which did not bear upon the great purpose of his soul, he enters into no details of his outward life. He visited the most brilliant cities of the ancient world; he travelled both in Asia and Africa, but he has given no account of these countries, nor of his adventures. He has kept a record of one journey only—his soul's journey through the various systems of religion and philosophy. This alone is of interest to him. His writings show what a wealth of information he acquired in this period of his life. Poets and philosophers became equally familiar to him, and he lifted the veil of all the mysteries of religion. He tells us that he had the opportunity of hearing many eminent representatives of Christianity in Italy, Greece, and Asia.* Pantænus, to whom he plainly alludes, was the teacher who exercised the most decisive influence over him. He says: "After hearing his teaching, I fixed my abode in Egypt." Like the bee of Sicily, he sought out in the field of the Scriptures, the sweet flowers of the word of prophets and apostles, and distilled pure knowledge into the souls of his hearers.† Pantænus, by his learning, his large-heartedness, and his piety, could not fail to fascinate a mind like Clement's. The disciple already attracted to Chris-

* "Strom.," I. i. § 11.

† Προφητικοῦ τε καὶ ἀποστολικοῦ λειμῶνος τὰ ἄνθη δρεπόμενος. (Ibid., I. i. § 11.)

tianity, possibly even already thoroughly converted to it, had not abjured the noble passion of his youth—the love of the great philosophy of his country. He could not repudiate this on the same grounds as the pagan superstitions, which it had secretly undermined. It must have been a lively joy to Clement to learn from his new master, that these noble systems of philosophy need not be treated as idols to be broken without mercy, but that they might in a measure be made to serve the cause of Christ; that the wisdom of Greece, like the Eastern magi, brought in fact its best treasures and laid them as an offering at the Redeemer's feet. Like the sun rising upon a country lying in darkness, this grand idea dawned upon the mind of the young Christian philosopher, and illuminated all his treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He felt that he need not renounce the pursuit of science; he grasped in its deep meaning the apostolic saying, that every thought might be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and, moved with holy jealousy, he set forth to conquer for his Captain the various realms of the human mind, showing no connivance with error and evil, but distinguishing with holy joy the precious pearls, buried in the foul dung-heap of paganism. Ancient religions and ancient philosophies he constrained to give evidence against themselves in favour of the truth, alike by their purest aspirations and by their shortcomings and blemishes. Following Pantænus in the office of catechist, Clement expounded, with equal felicity and boldness, the principles from which he started. His writings may be regarded as the faithful exponent of his teaching. They exhibit, first of

all, the noble spirit which animated all his scientific activity. He urges that every teacher of the truth should ask himself scrupulously "if he is pure from presumption, from the spirit of rivalry; if he is seeking not his own glory, nor any other recompense than the salvation of them that hear him."* Elsewhere he says yet more emphatically, that he who ventures to teach truth by his writings, has pledged himself before God, to trample under foot every selfish and mercenary consideration, and to contemn alike praise and payment. "He must needs become an imitator of the Lord. He will fulfil the will of God when he gives freely that which freely he has received, regarding himself as sufficiently repaid by his high career.† The price of prostitution may not be carried into the sanctuary." Again he says: "Blessed are the peacemakers; blessed they who by their teaching bring back into the path of peace, to the living Word, travellers who through ignorance have gone astray in the midst of life, and who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness." ‡ Could such wanderers find a better guide than Clement, a man who, having himself long taken toilsome steps on the wrong road, could speak with fullest sympathy to his old companions on the way?

This lofty disinterestedness, by which Clement was distinguished above all the hired masters of his time, gave to his teaching not only a higher moral power,

* Εἰ τοῦτον μόνον καρποῦται τὸν μεσθον, τὴν σωτηρίαν τῶν ἐπαϊόντων. ("Strom.," I. i. § 6.)

† Ibid., § 9.

‡ Μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, οἱ τοὺς ἐνταῦθα κατὰ τὸν βιὸν καὶ τὴν πλάνην πρὸς τῆς ἀγνοίας πολεμουμενους μεταδιδάσκοντες καὶ μετάγοντες εἰς εἰρήνην. (Ibid.)

but also a superiority in method. The best means of becoming all things to all men is to love all. Love never fails to find the way to the heart, and no *clairvoyance* of the mind can be compared with that of the heart, for discovering the points of contact between various individuals and the truth. Clement himself tells us with what care he endeavoured to adapt his teaching to the moral and intellectual condition of his hearers. He says: "He who devotes himself to oral teaching, founds the judgment he forms of his disciples upon experience and reflection. His eye fixes the disciple who is able to comprehend. He carefully notes the language of his hearers, their character, their manners and conduct, their mood of mind, their outward deportment, even the sound of their voice, that he may discern between the wayside, the stony ground, the trodden path, and the fertile soil —the good ground which, well prepared and ready for the seed, will bring forth a hundred-fold."*

We feel that Clement of Alexandria appreciated in all its dignity the priesthood of teaching. He reveals the great thought which moved him, when he says, taking up the same image of spiritual husbandry, that just as the earth is made soft with showers before the seed-time, so he waters the soil which he is to cultivate, with all that is good and true in the writings of the Greeks.† He makes use of the Hellenic philosophy as a preparation for revelation; he recognises in it a divine idea encompassed with falsity and error. "These tiny pearls," he says, "gathered from

* "Strom.," I. i. § 8.

† Καθάπερ οἱ γεωργοὶ προαρδεύσαντες τὴν γῆν. (Ibid., § 17.)

the ancient philosophies, and purified from their foul alloy, only enhance by contrast the preciousness of the pearl of great price."*

If without now entering upon any exposition of Clement's doctrine, we seek to characterise his teaching, it will appear to us inexhaustibly varied, rich, and original in form. Clement rejects all rhetorical ornament; he scorns that effeminate beauty of language, which marks the decline of true literature. "For myself," he says, "I am well assured that the matter of moment is to live by the Word, and to enter into His spirit; and I give myself no concern about beauty of words, only about the beauty of truth. The one thing needful is to labour to save those who desire salvation, not to make an array of phrases, like the ornaments of a woman. Words are as the vesture which clothes the body; the things expressed by words are the flesh and the nerves. We must not be so concerned about the raiment as about the welfare of the body."† Clement then adduces the true saying of Pythagoras, that the muses must be preferred to the syrens.‡ He is anxious that truth should not be bedecked and bedizened like a courtesan, but clothed in the simple and chaste beauty which is her fitting garb. He says, we must eschew in our words all elaborate and vain ornaments, as the Spartans proscribed perfumes and purple robes. Seasoning is not nourishment; a discourse which aims rather to please than to instruct, is an ill-prepared repast. "Let us

* "Strom.," I. i. § 16.

† Σωθῆναι γὰρ εὖ οἶδ' ὅτι καὶ συνάρασθαι τοῖς σώζεσθαι γλιχομένοις βέλτιστόν ἐστιν, οὐχι συνθεῖναι τὰ λεξείδια καθάπερ τὰ κόσμια. (Ibid., x. § 48.)

‡ Μούσας Σειρήνων, ἡδίους ἡγεῖσθαι. (Ibid.)

beware," he says again, "of making broad our phylacteries in the love of vain-glory. To the truly wise, one disciple is enough."*

Though thus rejecting all superfluous ornament, Clement writes in a style both animated and brilliant. He has not the great, grand eloquence of the classic ages, and, in spite of his very earnest endeavour, often fails to be simple. He has not the creative imagination which spontaneously produces sublime symbols. He has rather an erudite imagination, and borrows the striking images, with which his writings abound, more often from the large stores of his learning than from the book of nature. Profoundly versed in the religious and philosophical systems and literary treasures of antiquity, he perpetually strikes bright flashes of light from the rapid contact of ideas, myths, and poetical utterances, which cross and combine in the current of his thoughts. He lives much more in this artificial world, created by an advanced civilisation, than in the outer world, the fresh beauties of which entrance young or rejuvenated nations, and live again in their language and in the best days of their poetry. The metaphorical style of Clement is a complicated tissue of allusions, borrowed from the old philosophical and poetical traditions of mankind. In this aspect he is thoroughly Alexandrian, but he stands wholly apart from the pagan philosophers of his age, in the fervour which glows through all his erudition. If the statue is composed of divers metals, it is not the less an animated statue. All the various elements which he holds in combination, are fused in the fire of his own ardent conviction,

* "Strom.," I. x. § 48.

and whether he speaks of Orpheus or of Pythagoras, whether he quotes Homer or Plato, he is ever the faithful worshipper of the Eternal Word. His style, in its wealth and diversity, is only the reproduction of the wealth and variety of his thought. This very abundance and erudition render him sometimes obscure; and this obscurity is not unwelcome to him, since it hides from the gaze of the vulgar, mysteries which they could not comprehend. He desires to admit them only to the threshold of the temple, the inner sanctuary of which they would defile by their presence, and he thinks thus to secure the advantages of esoteric teaching, without avowing its principle, which in its aristocratic exclusiveness is so opposed to the Gospel. He sought, to use his own words, to half conceal while he revealed, to veil the highest mysteries of truth while he disclosed them, and to point to them in silence.* He desired that his disciples should put forth vigorous efforts to master the truth. He would that they should, as it were, walk up and down within the enclosure of his teaching, as in a well-planted garden, but that if they should find themselves therein as in a waste and untilled place, they should search for the truth by the sweat of their brow, or as men seek for a rose among thorns.†

The writings of Clement, which have come down to us, sufficiently indicate the subjects to which his teaching was directed. The "Exhortation to the Gentiles" is a treatise purely apologetic, in which he endeavours to show that faith in the Word is the end of all earnest researches after truth, as well as

* "Strom.," I. i. § 15. † Ibid., ii. § 21.

the response to all the unquiet yearnings of the heart, if only the heart be purged from the pollutions of pagan life. The "Pedagogue" is an admirable moral treatise, in which the ideal of the true Christian is traced in all its features, the soft and the stern, without any colouring of exaggerated asceticism. The noble treatise entitled, "How can a rich man be saved?" belongs to the same category. The "Stromata," or "Tapestries," are medleys of religious philosophy. The author introduces his book to us as a fair and fertile hill-side refreshed with the dew of heaven; it is covered with rich herbage and plane-trees, laurels and olives. It is a nursery where the trees to be transplanted must be carefully chosen out.* Questions of morals, metaphysics, and dialectics, are treated in it promiscuously; but Clement's true thoughts come out all the more clearly and vividly from this intentional confusion. The "Hypotyposes" (Sketches), of which we possess only some fragments, were conceived on the same plan as the "Stromata." Clement is also known to have written on the prophecies, and to have been the author of an exposition of the doctrine of Valentine, of treatises upon Easter, upon the rule of faith, upon Montanism and Judaism.† This imperfect catalogue of his writings, shows that all the questions of the day came under his notice. The breadth of his spirit made him more than one enemy. He mentions in his works one narrow-minded and obtuse individual, who took alarm at his boldness, and

* "Strom.," VIII. xviii. § 111.

† The best edition of his writings is that of J. Potter, Oxford, 1715. We quote Clement from the edition, in Vol. IV., of the "Bibliotheca Sacra," Leipsic, 1831.

who was especially indignant that he should seek any support for the Gospel in Greek philosophy. "I know," he says, "the murmurings of certain souls, timid through ignorance,* who assert that it is necessary to concentrate attention solely on essentials, on those things which relate directly to the faith, and to take no heed of anything beyond, since all else is vanity, and has neither use nor end. Some even go so far as to say that philosophy is an invention of the Evil One, wickedly suggested to man for his perdition. These 'Stromata' will show, on the contrary, that philosophy also is a creation of the Divine Providence." We do not know how much Clement had to suffer from this narrow and intolerant party, but we do know that the murmurings of opposition, so far from being silenced by his vigorous refutal, went on rising to a higher pitch, till their voice was heard echoing abroad in a mighty anathema. This is the faction which drove away from Alexandria the successor of Clement, and the most illustrious representative of his school—the great Origen.

In spite of all opposition, the teaching of Clement exerted a weighty influence on his age. He gathered around him a crowd of eager disciples, and like Pantænus, had the happiness of knowing that his work would be continued and developed in the spirit in which he had commenced it. We have a striking proof of the consideration which he never ceased to enjoy, in the fact that, notwithstanding

* Οὐ λέληθεν δὲ με καὶ τὰ θρυλούμενα πρός τινων ἀμαθῶς ψοφοδεῶν, χρῆναι λεγόντων περὶ τὰ ἀναγκαιότατα καταγίνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἔξωθεν καὶ περιττὰ ὑπερβαίνειν. ("Strom.," I. i. § 18.)

the opposition of his enemies, he was raised to the post of elder, and took part in the guidance of the Church.*

He thought it, nevertheless, his duty to leave Alexandria, when persecution burst forth afresh under Septimus Severus. He had always avowed moderate views with regard to martyrdom. He in no way depreciated its value, but he did not think any man ought to seek it voluntarily. He held that the signal from God should be calmly awaited, and that, following the precept of Christ, men persecuted in one city should flee to another, if they could do so without being untrue to the faith. He severely blames that which he calls the unseemly impatience for death, shown by the enthusiasts who courted martyrdom. Their death, he says, is not martyrdom but suicide, and they are like the Indian gymnosophists, who kindle their own funeral pile.† Acting on these convictions, Clement, in the year 202, during the storm of persecution in the East, sought an asylum with Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem. He died A.D. 220, after a life in which he consistently realised his own type of the true and wise Christian, the evangelical Gnostic, whose portrait he delighted to draw. Severe in manners, and even in garb, an austere Christian without being a violent ascetic, of large mind and broad sympathies, responsive to all the pure aspirations of the human conscience, a devoted worshipper of the Word, in whom he had found the fulness of truth, yet not ashamed to stoop to gather out of the dust and mire any grain of pure gold, which he saw half buried there; desiring

* Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," xxxviii. "Strom.," IV. iv. § 17.

no other wisdom than the folly of Christ apprehended by faith, but discerning in that folly all the treasures of Divine wisdom and knowledge; at once humble and independent, and having at command, as the medium of his thoughts, language pliant and exact, bearing the double impress of his own character and the character of his age;—such was Clement of Alexandria. He possessed in highest measure that essential qualification of an apologist, of being entirely in sympathy with his time, and yet able, by the superior power of Divine truth, to lead and mould it. He became all things to all men without concession and without compromise.

§ II. *Origen.*

The name which shed highest lustre on the Church of Alexandria was that of Origen—a name long alternating, in the judgment of history, between highest praise and deepest blame, now revered, now accursed, but great alike amidst blessing and cursing. Origen is one of the latest representatives of the age of faith and freedom. He stands on the threshold of a new era, in which a uniform system of theology will be imposed on minds the most diverse, and narrow limits will be set to Christian speculation. It was his misfortune to live in an intermediate age, when he might suppose that freedom of inquiry within the circle of the Christian faith was a consecrated right, and might easily ignore the fact, that a strong counter-revolution was in process, and was carrying with it the rising tide of public opinion. It is this position in which he

was placed, which constitutes the melancholy interest, and prepares, as it were, the drama of his life. It was a position that must have been full of peril and temptation to a heart less steadfast than Origen's, since it would have been so easy to sink into cowardly submission, or be stirred up to violent reaction. Origen never deviated from his own straight course; he neither bowed under the yoke, which he felt to be an unrighteous one, nor shook off lawful authority. He never abdicated the independence which was his right, and never sought such independence as would have led him into heresy. He courageously pursued his way, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, ever patient and undaunted, free from weakness and free from passion. His errors were grave, but none of them of such a nature as to cut him off from the common faith of the Church; he should have been refuted, not excommunicated. His errors were in any case less fraught with danger, than the pretensions of his adversaries to decide by force of authority on questions so delicate. If he erred on such and such a particular point of doctrine, he yet remains, after all, the champion of the good cause, the defender of lawful liberty, attainted and condemned in his person. Christian liberty could not have found a nobler champion, or have suffered in the person of a more honourable or worthy representative.

Origen was born at Alexandria in the sixth year of the reign of Commodus, A.D. 185.* His name was

* Our principal authority is his own writings, which we quote from the Delarue edition. The Sixth Book of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History contains a very interesting biography of Origen. The panegyric of Pamphylus, the farewell discourse

derived from Or, or Orus, which was that of an ancient god of the country; the proofs of indomitable firmness which he constantly gave, won for him the surname of "Adamantius," or the man of brass. His parents were Christians.* They made no more concession to paganism in giving their son the very common name of a god of the country, than we make in still calling the days of the week by their pagan designation. They enjoyed a certain competence, for his family only became poor after the confiscation of their goods, which followed on the imprisonment of the head of the house.† Leonides, the father of Origen, was a man of approved piety, and of a large and lofty mind, as is proved by his tolerance for the ardent curiosity of his son. The young man, endowed with a nature at once deep and intense, found himself placed in the most favourable conditions for its development. Everything tended to stimulate the intellect in that brilliant city, rich in the collected treasures of ancient culture, and incessantly echoing with the subtle and learned discussions of the philosophers.

Origen attended the schools open to studious youths. The young Christians were free to resort to these without exciting astonishment, thanks to the tolerance produced by an unbounded eclecticism. The Church was enjoying a transitory calm, which it owed to the indifference to religion of the son of Marcus Aurelius. There was therefore no obstacle to the liberal educa-

of Gregory Thaumaturgus to Origen, may also be consulted. The best German monograph is that of Redepenning, in two volumes.

* *Τῳ γὰρ Ὠριγένει τὰ τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν διδασκαλιάς ἐκ προγόνων ἐσώζετο.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xix.) † Ibid., ii.

tion of Origen. He could study without hindrance the so-called encyclical or preparatory sciences, which included geometry, arithmetic, and grammar. But it was chiefly beneath the paternal roof that he found the food of his moral life. Leonides had a true conception of the high vocation of a Christian father. He regarded himself as the priest of his house, and he deputed to no one the charge of cultivating the mind and heart of his son. He read the Gospel with him, and made him commit a portion to memory every day. After the reading, they had a free talk together over it; and Origen very early gave tokens of that eager thirst for knowledge which nothing could quench, and which was the ruling passion of his life. Not content with the first explanations given him, he pursued his investigations with a bold simplicity. He would not be satisfied with the literal meaning of the Scriptures, but was always seeking a deep and hidden sense.*

His father endeavoured to keep within bounds this young and buoyant mind, which in its very first attempts at flight left him so far behind. He could not help admiring, yet he trembled at the noble daring of the boy, and while he sought to keep so perilous a power in due control, he blessed God for the gift of such a son. He felt that this zeal and earnestness could not be attributed to mere intellectual curiosity; that they must have their source in a soul penetrated with the love of truth. The young Origen scorned all that which ensnares and captivates the senses, all the

* Ὡς μὴ δ' ἐξαρκεῖν αὐτῷ τὰς ἁπλᾶς καὶ προχείρους τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων ἐντεύξεις, ζητεῖν δέ τι πλέον. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. ii.)

attractions that might have charmed and led him away in a capital city rich and splendid as Alexandria ; he lived only for the unseen, and bent upon the highest truths and grandest mysteries, the powers of a quick imagination, and a deeply thoughtful mind. He thus gave all his faculties to Christianity in the first bloom of their freshness and beauty, and he inspired all who came in contact with him, with that tender respect, which is ever felt for a youth keeping himself pure in the midst of corruption and scepticism. More than once his father, bending over the boy as he lay asleep, would kiss his bare breast, the sanctuary (as he felt) of the spirit of God.*

Origen's faith was nurtured in the Church as well as in the home. Christian worship at Alexandria was a thing of much beauty. Nowhere else were the public prayers so poetically rich and full, as we see from the liturgical documents of the time. The forms of adoration were grand and solemn, though also striking in their simplicity. It is pleasant to follow the young Origen in thought into those daily assemblies, where the Church of Alexandria, like the woman in the Gospel, broke over the feet of Christ a vase of very precious ointment, in the offering of adoring praise, which their full hearts poured forth in an ever-flowing, ever-fragrant stream. There is every reason to believe that Origen had been received to the Lord's Supper before the death of his father. That service was a deeply impressive one, and might well leave a track of fire in so susceptible a soul.

Origen also listened at this period to the two

* *Ὥσπερ δὲ θείου πνεύματος ἔνδον.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. ii.)

illustrious catechists, his predecessors, Pantænus and Clement; * these exerted a mighty influence over him. He was predestined by natural disposition to be their most faithful disciple. He found in their teaching, that depth and subtlety of exposition, which met the cravings of his soul from childhood upwards, for other interpretations of Scripture than the simple commentaries of his father. The attempt made by these illustrious teachers to harmonise science and faith, was the response to his most ardent aspirations. It was an inestimable privilege for such a mind as his to meet with a master like Clement, who had at that time the ascendant over him of great moral and intellectual superiority. He formed a close friendship with a young fellow-disciple from Asia Minor, who had come to hear Clement. This was Alexander, subsequently Bishop of Jerusalem, who was to prove a valuable helper to Origen when evil days came.

This threefold education in the family, the school, and the Church, had given Origen an early maturity, without, however, chilling his youthful ardour. God had yet in reserve for him sterner and more painful teaching. The fierce persecution which broke out under Septimus Severus made cruel ravages at Alexandria. Origen's father was thrown into prison. It was a sore separation between him and the son who was bound to him by such tender ties, both as a child and as a Christian. Origen's soul was torn between

* It is Alexander who tells us that Origen had listened with him to Pantænus and Clement: Πατέρας γὰρ ἴσμεν, he says, in speaking of himself and Origen, τοὺς μακαρίους ἐκείνους τοὺς προοδεύσαντας Πάνταινον καὶ Κλήμεντα. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xiv.)

his deep love for his father, and his desire to see him steadfast and immovable in the faith. Knowing the tenderness of his fatherly heart, and fearing lest his courage should give way in the struggle, Origen addressed to the captive in his cell those heroic words, over which doubtless the hot tears fell fast: "My father, flinch not because of us."* Passionately he longed to be with him, and to die at his side, confessing the faith; a yearning for martyrdom took possession of his soul. This was, perhaps, a sort of safety-valve for his youthful impetuousness. In vain his mother with tears entreated him to have pity on her; nothing could move him. The young Christian soldier could not rest upon his arms while the battle was raging around. His mother was obliged to hide his clothes to prevent his rushing upon death.† This was the strongest temptation, the highest ambition of his early years. He had yet to learn that the courage of patient obedience is the most real of all courage, and that no man has a right to anticipate God's time. Leonides was put to death; his goods were confiscated, and his family, thus suddenly deprived of its head, was plunged into distress.‡ A youth of eighteen was the sole support of his mother; but this young man had courage and devotedness equal to his task, and to other duties yet harder and higher lying beyond.

Origen found a temporary home with a rich lady of Alexandria, who loved him with all but a mother's love.

* Ἔπεχε, μὴ δι' ἡμᾶς ἄλλο τι φρονήσῃς. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. ii.)

† Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. ii.

‡ "Pauper relinquitur." (St Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," liv.)

Unhappily, she was strongly inclined to heresy, and had become ensnared by the brilliant and sophistical teaching of one of those Asiatic gnostics, who never scrupled to use intrigue and craft to ensure the ascendancy of their doctrine. They were wont especially to put forth all their art to lead away the susceptible souls of women. Paul (such was the name of this heretical teacher) was not a man who erred in good faith on some secondary point of Christian truth. He was one of those dangerous heretics, who undermined Christianity under pretext of interpreting it, who borrowed its language, but despoiled it of all its moral and religious significance, transfusing it with oriental dualism and fatalistic pantheism. Origen, though his mind was open to receive all opinions, and never recoiled from the investigation of any system, did not fall for one moment under the seductive influence of the heretic Paul. Neither gratitude towards his benefactress, nor the reckless daring of the youthful mind, could lead him one step in this direction. He preserved towards Paul an attitude of severe dignity. He would not join with him in any act of piety, because he knew how easy it is to conceal mortal error under pious phrase, and equivocation in prayer appeared to him hateful.* That which was especially repugnant to Origen in the bold speculations of Gnosticism, was the complete suppression of the moral element, and the formal negation of liberty in God and man. To these vivid impressions received in youth, we may attribute the sometimes exaggerated reaction

* Οὐδὲ πώποτε πρσυτράπη κατὰ τὴν εὐχὴν αὐτῷ συστῆναι. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. ii.)

in an opposite direction, by which the system of Origen is characterised. In conniving at heresy, he would have felt he was denying the God for whom his father had died, and he shrunk with horror from apostasy in all its forms, whether open before the tribunal of the magistrates, or lurking latent in the complacent smile and tacit approval of error at the table of a rich and benevolent lady.

As Origen was not willing long to live in dependence upon any one, and anxious to free himself from the protection of a house where heresy was held in honour, he endeavoured to earn his bread by giving lessons in grammar. Grammar was at that time cultivated in Alexandria with much success. By the development given to it, it had become a really new science, and one remarkably adapted to the subtle and erudite spirit of an age, in which analysis was more and more taking the place of inspiration. It must not be supposed that grammar was studied simply as the constructive genius of a language; it embraced also the interpretation of its literary master-pieces, the determination of their genuineness, and even mythology and æsthetics. It was a learned exegesis of classical literature. Origen, in teaching it, prepared himself by such studies for the exegesis of sacred literature, in which, in spite of serious errors, he was to occupy so eminent a place. He was not, indeed, the man to devote himself exclusively to purely literary instruction. His faith was too living not to be diffusive, and he could not but strive to impart to his pupils his own most cherished convictions. The School of the Catechists was at this time dispersed. Clement had retired into Asia Minor.

Persecution had not stifled the desire after truth; on the contrary, it had, as it always had, given it a new stimulus, and noble hearts were more inclined than in times of quiescence, towards the proscribed religion. No one offered himself to carry on the great work thus interrupted. Origen, actuated only by his zeal, took it up in humble measure, contenting himself with giving private instructions to some pagans, who had probably attended his course of grammar. Among these were Plutarch, and Heraclas, subsequently Bishop of Alexandria. It seems that these pagans were the first to ask the young teacher to instruct them in the Word of God, for Eusebius says that they came to Origen of their own accord.* Demetrius, the Bishop of Carthage, recognised the Divine approval in the success which attended the teaching of Origen, and conferred on him, in spite of his youth, the charge of catechist. A young man of eighteen thus found himself the successor of Clement.

This phase of the life of Origen is full of beauty. Persecution had been revived under a new proconsul, and every day cruel tortures were inflicted on the Christians. To teach the new religion in such times, was to place life every moment in jeopardy. Over the heads of masters and disciples was perpetually suspended the glittering sword, and it was with the dungeon and the stake full in view that they discoursed of the great questions of religion. Their discussions were not held in spacious courts or sumptuous villas. The little school met secretly, in some obscure dwelling, and

* Προσῄεσαν αὐτῷ τινὲς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν ακουσόμενοι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. ii.)

always exposed to the danger of being surprised and led away to death. What a sublime theology was that on which there thus fell the flame of the sacrifice ever ready to be offered! If ever the name of philosophy was well deserved, it assuredly was so by these young disciples at Alexandria, who loved wisdom well enough to die for her, though many of them perhaps had caught but dim and transient glimpses of the truth. This school of martyr-theologians witnessed constant breaches in its ranks; between two meetings, between two chapters of the same study, one and another catechist had been seized and sacrificed. The heart glows with admiration for these young adherents of the new faith, who, under a master even younger than themselves, pursued, in the midst of such daunting difficulties, the search after truth, who remained faithful to the liberal and enlightened spirit of the school of Alexandria, and kept their minds free from all passionate resentment; whom not even the ruthless persecution under which they suffered, could bring to regard paganism as merely a hateful and murderous foe, but who still viewed it as in many aspects the harbinger of the religion it sought to destroy. It required a rare nobility of soul and spirit to cleave to the liberal theology of Clement through all the horrors of the proscription. A mere question of doctrine and system was raised under such circumstances to the moral height of loftiest disinterestedness.

The example of Origen was of much force in sustaining the courage of his disciples. He might be seen constantly in the prison of the pious captives, carrying to them the consolation they needed. He stood by them

till the last moment of trial came, and gave them the parting kiss of peace on the very threshold of the arena or at the foot of the stake.* More than once the irritated mob were on the point of stoning him, and he escaped only by a miracle. "The hatred of the pagans," says Eusebius, "was so violent, because of the numbers who learned from Origen the mysteries of the faith, that they were seen assembled in crowds around the house where he lived, trying to stir up the soldiers to violence. So fierce was the enmity against him, that no house in Alexandria was a secure refuge for him, and he was constantly pursued by the persecutors from place to place." † One day, when he had accompanied to the place of execution his disciple Plutarch, condemned to death as a Christian, he narrowly escaped a summary and violent death at the hands of his fellow citizens, who charged him with being the cause of the death of the young martyr.‡ Another day he was seized and dragged to the temple of Serapis, where palms were thrust into his hands to be laid, according to custom, upon the altar of the Egyptian god. Brandishing the boughs, he exclaimed: "Here are the triumphal palms, not of the idol, but of Christ!" §

In the midst of such imminent perils, Origen nevertheless steadily pursued his course of teaching and his studies. His thirst for knowledge was insatiable; letters sacred and profane, the systems of every school, all received his attention; all were passed under a scrutiny quick and eager, as was the conviction which

* Τοὺς μάρτυρας μετὰ πολλῆς παῤῥησίας φιλήματι προσαγορεύοντα. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. iii.) † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

§ Epiphanes, "Hæres," lxiv.

inspired all his investigations and his entire life. It is evident from his writings that he went on amassing knowledge through all this troubled period. He rendered himself familiar with the ecclesiastical writers, whom he quotes with ease and without pedantry. He devoted himself finally to philosophy, so as to rise to the dignity of a task, which became every day more arduous through the character of the affluent and lettered heretics who thronged to hear him. "When I had given myself entirely," he says, "to the Word of God, and when the reputation of my learning had spread abroad, a great number of heretics, men versed in the sciences of Greece, and especially in philosophy, came to listen to me. I thought it then my duty to study thoroughly the dogmas of the heretics, and all of truth that the philosophers laid claim to tell."* He subsequently took a more decisive step in this direction, by attending the school of one of the most illustrious philosophers of the age.

No intellectual studies diverted Origen from that which he held of supreme importance—the pursuit of moral perfection and the realisation of the Christian ideal. It was almost inevitable that this ideal should assume at this period in Alexandria the form of asceticism. An atmosphere wholly impregnated with Eastern ideas could not be breathed with impunity, and the deserts presented the constant spectacle of the Therapeutics leading a life of extravagant self-mortification. Again, the ascetic tendency was upheld in uncontested su-

* Ἔδοξεν ἐξετάσαι τὰ τε τῶν αἱρετικῶν δόγματα καὶ τὰ τῶν φιλοσόφων. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xix.)

premacy in the metropolis of Egypt, by all the various systems of philosophy, or rather, it was an element common to them all, and rose above all their diversities. The ancient religion of the country, with its ineffable sadness and preoccupation with the thought of death, naturally tended to foster asceticism. Asceticism seemed also to supply the starting-point for the religious renovation after which men's hearts aspired. The Church in Alexandria could not escape the same influence.

We may observe, however, here, that the Christians never, in their most extreme self-mortifications, admitted the favourite dogma of the East—the irremediable doom of the material element. They never ceased to believe in the resurrection of the body, and to regard reverently the dust which was one day to be changed into the glorious temple of the enfranchised spirit. Let us admit yet further, that if Christianity does not seek the destruction of the flesh, it does nevertheless require its mortification; it sanctions and counsels an asceticism, not to be prescriptively imposed, but induced by the free impulse of individual piety. From the time of St. Paul, it has been practised by all whose souls have grasped the grand ideal of the Christian life. Origen belonged emphatically to this company of elect spirits. We cannot wonder, then, to see him carrying asceticism to its utmost limits, under the impulse of youthful ardour and under the influences of his age and country. Anxious to escape from the necessity of teaching grammar, which occupied much of the time he yearned to devote to higher studies and more important instructions, Origen sold his fine classical library, consisting of manuscripts copied with his own hand, for a sum

of four oboli, which were to be paid to him by daily instalments to provide for his maintenance.* He ate only enough for the bare sustenance of life, submitted himself to long and rigorous fastings, and spent the greater part of the night in study, especially in the study of Holy Scripture.† He allowed himself only a few hours of sleep, and his bed was the bare earth. He never drank wine, and walked barefoot, like the poorest individual, in the streets of a brilliant and literary city, where knowledge was the path to wealth.‡ No entreaty of his pupils could induce him to accept any payment even from the richest; he declared he had freely received and would freely give. The severity of his life was attested by his threadbare garments and by his attenuated features, which burned with the spiritual fire of the soul. He sought to carry out literally the precept of Christ, not to have two coats, and to take no thought for the morrow. This implicit obedience to the commands of the Master seemed to him strictly obligatory on those who bear the high responsibility of teaching His doctrine. Origen has laid bare his inmost thoughts on this subject in a homily upon Genesis uttered some years later. "Pharaoh," he says, "gives lands to his priests; God gives no parcel of ground to His, but says to them: *I am your portion.* O you who read this Scripture, mark it, and consider the difference between the two priesthoods, for fear that having your portion upon earth, and burdening your-

* Τέτταρσιν ὀβολοῖς τῆς ἡμέρας ἠρκεῖτο. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. iii.)

† Τοτὲ μὲν τοῖς ἐν ἀσίταις γυμνασιοις ἐνασκούμενος. (Ibid.)

‡ Μηδενὶ μηδαμῶς κεχρημένος ὑποδηματι, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἴνου χρήσεως ἀπεσχημένος. (Ibid.)

selves with earthly cares and interests, you be the priests of Pharaoh rather than of God.* Pharaoh desires that his priests should possess lands, that they may give themselves to the cultivation of their fields and possessions, not to that of souls and of the Divine law. Listen to that which the Lord Jesus Christ enjoins His priests: 'He that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple.' I tremble as I repeat these words. It is myself, aye myself, whom I accuse, and I speak my own condemnation.† Jesus Christ rejects as His disciple him who possesses anything, and has not forsaken all that he had. And we, what are we doing? With what face can we read these declarations ourselves and expound them to the people, when not only have we not renounced all that we have, but are even anxious to acquire more than we possessed before we knew Christ? Condemned as we are by our own conscience, have we the right to be silent and to keep back that which is written against us? No, I will not aggravate my crime. I avow, here in the presence of this people,‡ that these things are written, even though I know that I have failed to carry them out. But after such a declaration, let us make haste to fulfil them; let us press out of the ranks of the priests of Pharaoh, who have their possessions upon earth, into the ranks of the priests of the Lord, who have not their portion in

* "Observate ergo qui hæc legitis, omnes Domini, sacerdotes et videte quæ sit, differentia sacerdotum, ne forte qui partem habent in terra et terrenis cultibus ac studiis vacant, non tam Domini quam Pharaonis sacerdotes esse videantur." (Origen, "In Gen.," Hom. xvi. 51.)

† "Contremisco hæc dicens." (Ibid.)

‡ "Confiteor et palam populo audiente." (Ibid.)

worldly things, but have God Himself for their heritage. Such an one was he who said: 'We are as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' And, again, listen to Peter: 'Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.' These are the riches of the priests of Jesus Christ. They have nothing, and yet behold that which they bestow! No riches of earth can be compared with such heavenly treasure."

Such words explain, better than all the testimonies of the Fathers, the influence of the young doctor of Alexandria. He was the first to bear on his own shoulders the burden which he sought to lay upon his hearers, and before he charged them to make themselves poor for Christ's sake, he made himself the poorest of the poor. How vast the distance between such teaching and the elegant dissertations of Seneca on poverty, delivered with the practical comment of the gold stored away in the cellar of his mansion. Origen might well say, modifying the famous melancholy adage of pagan antiquity: "I see and teach that which is most excellent; I strive with groanings to attain to it." Thus it was said by those who saw him, "As is his teaching so is his life."* His life was the most beautiful of his sermons. The illustrious professors of the Museum of Alexandria, with all their glory and authority, could not contend victoriously with this young man—the hero and martyr of his faith—teaching in secret in an upper chamber, in the midst of poverty

* *Οἷον γοῦν τῶν λογον τοιόνδε φασὶ τὲν τρόπον.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. iii.)

and reproach, his body arrayed in vile raiment and wasted with toil and fasting.

Not satisfied with self-mortification, Origen even went so far as to mutilate his body, taking literally the words of the Saviour about those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God.* It is strange to see the great defender of allegorical interpretation belying on this point his favourite theories. One cannot help asking how it was, that with his enlarged and enlightened intellect, he fell into this unexampled error, which he afterwards fully recognised as such. It must be regarded as the unreasoning and passionate reaction, so to speak, against youthful lusts. Conscious that in spite of all his austerities these were still stirring within him, feeling his pulses beat quicker at their suggestion even on his naked couch of earth, more self-humiliated by the mere approach of temptation than others by actual sin, finding snares in his teaching, which brought him into contact with women as well as men,† and eager to avoid even the appearance of evil and any pretext for calumny, Origen thought himself happy in finding in the Gospel, words which would warrant his escape from all these humiliating struggles. Clearly he acted with blind precipitation, and fell into grave error; but his motive was pure, and while blaming him, one is fain to respect even in its aberrations such sensitiveness of conscience, such unshrinking intensity of religious feeling.

* Ἁπλούστερον καὶ νεανικώτερον ἐκλαβών. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. viii.)

† Διὰ το μὴ ἀνδράσι μόνον καὶ γυναιξὶ δὲ τὰ θεῖα προσομιλεῖν. (Ibid.)

Origen was not one of those proud ascetics, who submit to privations only to be repaid in glory and the praise of their fellows for all that they voluntarily endure, and who fast and go about with sad countenances that they may draw upon themselves the attention of men. His austerity was the secret of his private life, and he would have fain kept secret all his self-inflicted penances. Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, was nevertheless apprised of his imprudent act of self-mutilation; but he judged him as we have judged him, admiring and blaming at the same time, and he encouraged Origen to continue courageously a course of instruction which was attended with ever-growing success.*

It was at this time he took a step which was to be variously judged. He discerned in the greater part of his Alexandrine hearers, the trace of a rival power, which sought to divide their allegiance. This was the influence of a philosopher who had recently founded a new school, admirably adapted to those times of agitation, in which idealised memories of the past blended with aspirations towards the future, and the human soul, wearied but restless still with deep desire, failed to distinguish between religion and philosophy, and would fain at once believe and know, worship and adore. Ammonius Saccas—this was the philosopher's name—combined with much skill the old philosophical traditions of Greece, and especially Platonism, which was much in favour, with the new needs of the age, and with that new oriental theosophy without which all doctrine appeared at that time dry

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. viii.

and sterile. He wrote nothing, but he exerted by his oral teaching an influence resembling that of Socrates. To attempt to reconcile Greek speculation with the religious mysteries of the East, was nothing very new or very daring at Alexandria; it was an essay constantly repeated. But Ammonius Saccas put into it new ability and new method; it might be predicted that he would found a great school, and that if pagan philosophy shone forth again in renewed lustre, it would be indebted to him for its revival. Origen, ever clear-sighted, at once perceived that the conflict would be severe, and, anxious to become familiar with his opponent's mode of thought, believing it possible also that he might receive some light from him, he repaired to the school of the new philosopher. There he met with a young man of large intellect, who united the most scrupulous devotion as a pagan, to a bold system of metaphysics. This was Porphyry, subsequently to become a formidable foe to Christianity. Porphyry thus describes the impression which Origen made upon him at this time: "I remember," he says, "having seen Origen in my youth. His glory was then great, and it has been enhanced among his followers by the works he has left behind. He was a hearer of the philosopher Ammonius, the instigator of the greatest advance in philosophy made in our age."* Origen felt no scruple in giving his mind to these deep researches. They seemed to him a preparation and introduction, as it were, to Christian theology. To study Greek philosophy was in his view, as he himself tells us, to carry off the gold of the Egyptians, to convert it

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xix.

into the sacred vessels of the altar.* He boldly took the position of a Christian philosopher at Alexandria, and wore, like Justin Martyr, the philosopher's mantle.†

He made use of the interval of peace enjoyed by the Christians after the death of Septimus Severus, and during the reign of Caracalla, to undertake the first of his great journeys. He desired to visit the Church of the West, which differed in many respects from that of the East, but which had so nobly paid its tribute of martyrs to the persecution. The Church of Rome had a special interest for him on account both of its history and position. It was at that time the oldest of the great Churches of the West.‡ Here Peter and Paul had suffered martyrdom, and their graves were still to be seen. The most eminent and the most dangerous heretics had all visited it; an entire nation had there been won over from idolatry to Christ. Rome was also the capital of the world, the imperial city, the western Babylon, which had made all nations drink of the cup of her abominations, and which still exerted an irresistible fascination. There only could paganism be seen carried out to its full and final issues, exhibited in all its glory and in all its shame, and spreading over its corruption a robe of royal purple. Origen does not appear to have made a long sojourn at Rome.§ There

*"Ινα σκυλεύσαντες τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους, εὕρωσιν ὕλην πρὸς τὴν κατασκευὴν τῶν παραλαμβανομένων εἰς τὴν πρὸς θεὸν λατρείαν (Origen, "Epist. ad Gregor.," I. xxx.)

† Φιλόσοφου ἀναλαβὼν σχῆμα. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xiv.)

‡ Τὴν αρχαιοτάτην. (Ibid.)

§ Ἔνθα οὐ πολὺ διατρίψας. (Ibid.) "Constat eum fuisse Romæ sub Zephyrino episcopo." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," I. iv.)

was indeed nothing likely to detain him. He found himself in a world altogether foreign to his favourite pursuits. The practice and internal government of the Church were the subjects most interesting to the Christians of Rome. The grave questions of doctrine and apology agitated in the East, had but small interest for these practical and narrow minds, who were much more concerned about modifications in discipline and the ecclesiastical organisation of the Church, than about the settlement of dogmatic theology. The Church of Rome was passing at this period through an internal crisis, which we shall presently describe in detail. Let it suffice now to say that the hierarchical party, ably led by Callisthus, under the pontificate of Zephyrinus, an aged and feeble man, was on the verge of achieving a signal triumph. Origen belonged to the liberal party both in the Church and in theology. He could not fail to be therefore much scandalised by that which was transpiring in Rome.* It left a bitter and painful impression upon him, as we gather from this significant passage in one of his homilies: "The Church is the temple of God, built up of living stones, but it has members who live as though they belonged to the world. They change the house of prayer, composed of living stones, into a den of thieves. Who, then, seeing the sins committed in some Churches by those who make

† The recently-discovered manuscript, the "Philosophoumena" of Hippolytus, has been falsely attributed to Origen. The author of this writing, which throws a strong light upon this internal struggle in the Church of Rome, speaks of himself as a bishop. This wholly precludes the idea that Origen was the writer; but those who ascribe it to him support our opinion, that his journey to Rome must have done much to strengthen him in his opposition to the hierarchical party there dominant at that time.

a gain of the piety of others, and who, not content with receiving their daily bread for preaching the Gospel, make it a means of amassing riches,—who, I say, would not confess that the great and glorious mystery of the Church has been changed into a den of thieves?"* Origen, in this passage, clearly marks the distinction between the visible and the invisible Church, between the Church as it is, and the Church as it ought to be, and it is easy to see how far removed is his stand-point from that of the hierarchical party.

On his return to Alexandria, Origen gave himself again to teaching with renewed ardour. His hearers became so numerous,† that he was obliged to seek assistance from Heraclas, one of his own disciples. To him he entrusted instruction in all the preparatory sciences, reserving philosophy and theology to himself. His reputation spread far and wide, as was soon shown in a striking manner. A Roman soldier, from the depths of Arabia, arrived one day at Alexandria, bearing a message, which seemed a strange one in such hands. His general had sent to ask the Bishop Demetrius and the Governor of Egypt, to send Origen without delay to him, that he might confer with him on the Christian doctrine.‡ Origen did not hesitate, and at once set out on the long journey across the desert, to carry the water of life to this thirsty soul. Some years later he was sent

* Origen, "In Matthæum," xvi. 22. "Opera," III. 752.

† St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," liv.

‡ Ὡς ἀν μετὰ σπουδῆς ἀπάσης τὸν Ὠριγένην πέμψοιην κοινωνήσοντα λόγων αὐτῷ. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xix.)

for to Antioch by Mammæa, the mother of Alexander Severus, who, desiring to know the Christian religion, thought she could not do better than inquire of the famous doctor of Alexandria.* He remained some time at this liberal court, which gave a ready welcome to every religious doctrine, and erred only in this, that among so many conflicting ideas, it failed to make a choice. Origen expounded the truth of Christ to his illustrious hearers with as much frankness as to his disciples at Alexandria, and when he departed he left upon their hearts strong and vivid impressions, which were, however, unhappily dissipated by a too lax eclecticism.

In his extraordinary zeal for the interpretation of the sacred books, Origen, during his abode in Egypt, gave himself to the study of the Hebrew tongue. He was anxious to test for himself the exactness of the translation. He thought, too, that Hebrew, as the primitive language of mankind, would become the universal language; he almost went so far as to ascribe a sort of sacred magic to the original words of the holy books. In this he fell in with the superstition of his age. At the same time that he was preparing himself for these vast exegetical labours, he formed a friendship which was to be of immense value to him. A rich inhabitant of Alexandria, named Ambrose, had allowed himself to be led away by one of those numerous Gnostic sects, which went on multiplying like the phantoms of a diseased brain, and promulgated doctrines vague as the creations of a dream. Ambrose was one of those conscientious heretics who sought

* Eusebius, "H.E.," VI. xix.

out Origen to inquire of his doctrine. By Origen he was brought back to a sounder faith, and from this time Ambrose entertained a most deep and grateful affection for his benefactor, and a bond of closest intimacy was formed between them. Ambrose placed his large fortune at the disposal of Origen, or rather at the service of the cause which, in his view, found its mightiest advocate in the learned doctor of Alexandria.

His own desire was to give the widest possible sphere of influence to the teaching and writings of his friend. He knew well that Origen would not receive one coin for himself, but that he would accept any sacrifice for the spread of his faith, because then it would be not his own interest but the honour of Christ which would be promoted. Origen felt, like Clement, some degree of repugnance to writing books. He only did so at the pressing request of his friend, who urged it upon him incessantly, and provided the means for putting his thoughts into circulation.* Ambrose gave to Origen seven secretaries, who took it in turn to write without pause or interruption from his dictation; and beside these he had in his employ a number of copyists. He himself was the most zealous fellow-worker with his illustrious master. Origen has paid a noble tribute to him in the fragment of a letter which has come down to us: "The pious Ambrose, who has devoted himself to God, thinking that I loved work, and that I was truly athirst for the Divine Word, has convinced me by his laborious zeal and his love for the sacred

* *Ἀμβροσίου ἐς τὰ μάλιστα παρορμοῦντος ἀντὸν μυρίαις ὅσαις προτροπαῖς.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxiii.)

Scriptures.* . . . We never cease comparing texts; we discuss them during meals, and after meals allow ourselves no time for walking or rest; we return at once to our studies, and diligently correct the manuscripts.† So far from giving the whole night to slumber, we carry on our labours till very late, not to speak of the morning's work, which is pursued without relaxation till the ninth and sometimes the tenth hour. Such a measure of time should be devoted to teaching and the deep study of the Divine oracles, by all who wish to make them the serious business of life." ‡

There was something beautiful and noble in the association of these two men, of whom the one placed all his fortune and all his interest at the service of truth, and the other consecrated to it all his genius. The house of Ambrose became a sort of scientific and Christian monastery, where zeal alone imposed severe regulations, which were freely accepted and joyfully observed. It was a sort of foreshadowing of Port-Royal. Origen was thus enabled to accomplish vast exegetical labours. He endeavoured first to fix the text and the literal sense of the holy books; he began to draw up the ingenious comparative table, which placed side by side the Hebrew text, the Septuagint version, and several other ancient translations.§ Following the example of the Alexandrian grammarians, he wrote scholiums and commentaries on the sacred text, in which he endeavoured to give an intimate

* Νομίζων με φιλόπονον εἶναι καὶ πάνυ διψᾶν τοῦ θείου λόγου ἤλεγξε τῇ ἰδιᾷ φιλοπονίᾳ. (Origen, "Epist. ad quemdam de Ambrosio." "Opera," I. 63.)

† Ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς ἐκείνοις φιλολογεῖν καὶ ἀκριβοῦν τὰ ἀντίγραφα. (Ibid.)

‡ Ibid. § Epiphanes, "Hæres.," lxiv.

knowledge of the sacred writers, and to present their chain of thought. Origen was in truth the creator of scientific exegesis, and in spite of the defects of his allegorical method, he fairly merits the glory of having first apprehended what a commentary on sacred Scripture ought to be. Before him, theologians had made ingenious dissertations upon texts. He tried to elicit their real meaning. He was the first to attempt to determine the true text, and to interpret it. He fell into many errors, but he nevertheless opened a mine of wealth. His Commentaries on St. John, on Genesis, and the Psalms, were commenced at this time. His great delight was in the study of St. John; he rejoiced to trace him in his calm and royal flight into the sublimities of Christian metaphysics; he would fain follow him, who has been so well called the Eagle of the Gospel, in his soarings towards the sun of the moral world.

Origen wrote at this period, beside numerous exegetical works, the "Stromata," or Medleys, being extracts from the ancient philosophers. But his great work was his book "On the Principles," in which, with perfect candour, he stated his whole philosophical and theological creed. In this volume, Platonism was closely associated with fervent piety, and some vestiges of the dualism of the ancient Greek philosophy, were corrected and modified by so absolute a faith in freedom of action, both in God and man, that free-will was given as the universal explanation of the problems of the world and of history, the actual condition of every man being fixed by the anterior determination of his will. In order to judge of the effect produced at

Alexandria by such a book, which, after affirming the pre-existence of all beings, opened to them the bright perspective of universal restoration; in order not to exaggerate the amazement and alarm which would be caused by theories so daring, supported by texts interpreted with more or less of freedom, we must carry ourselves back to a period which allowed large latitude to Christian thought, and clung tenaciously only to the foundations of the faith. Above all, we must place ourselves in the world in which Origen lived, in the midst of a Church which had received and approved the teaching of Pantænus and Clement. The system of Origen, in the time and place where it was developed, did not exceed the liberty tolerated by the Church in matters of doctrine. It must not be forgotten, that at the commencement of the third century the Church had not yet instituted those great and solemn sessions known under the name of General Councils, in which doctrine was defined with the fixedness of a formulary. Faith found its official expression in the very simple formula of baptism, or in the slightly more detailed confession, which had as it were blossomed out of that, and which is now known as the Apostles' Creed. Men confined themselves to the great facts of redemption, without forming them into a system. Irenæus, some time previously, had contrasted Gnosticism with that which he called the faith of all the Churches. He contents himself with affirming, in general terms, the fall, forgiveness, the unity of the two Testaments, the calling of the Gentiles, the incarnation, and the resurrection.*

* Irenæus, "Contra Hæres.," I. x.

Origen did not at all overpass the limits assigned to Christian thought by the Bishop of Lyons, the zealous champion of orthodoxy. Platonist errors were diffused through all the atmosphere in which he lived. Universalism had not as yet been either discussed or repudiated. Origen, in insisting as he did upon moral freedom, clearly marked his divergence from Gnosticism, which was the great heresy of his day. He might therefore feel that he only made use of his most simple right, in giving expression to his views in his book "On the Principles." It is certain that the work produced no immediate scandal; it was, in fact, but the epitome of doctrines which its author had long openly professed. Its appearance would doubtless excite some indignation in the ranks of the narrow party, of which Clement had already had reason to complain. This party looked with an evil eye on the bold flights of Christian speculation, and was especially alarmed to see the Church invaded with philosophical theories and studies. Demetrius, the bishop, did not, however, at once break with Origen; he only subsequently made a pretext of his theological views, when he was anxious on other grounds to be rid of him. The question of doctrine was not the cause or the real occasion of the grave difficulties which arose between Origen and his former partisans; it was but a cloak to cover a purely ecclesiastical jealousy.

We are approaching the most painful and troubled period in the life of Origen, the period also in which the nobleness of his character shone forth with brightest lustre. Some years previously, in a journey made by

him into Asia Minor, at the time when the Emperor Caracalla was filling the city of Alexandria with terror and blood, he had been invited by the bishops of Palestine to take part in the public worship, although he was not invested with any priestly dignity. This was quite in harmony with the ancient tradition of the Church. For a long time the right to take a direct share in the instruction and edification of the sacred assemblies, was held to be common to all Christians, and it had rather fallen into disuse than been abolished. It appears to have been retained longer in Palestine than at Alexandria. Origen had no hesitation in responding to the desire expressed by friends dear to his heart, worthy of all his confidence, and occupying a high position in the Church. He preached therefore at Cæsarea, and with much success.* Demetrius, who was an advocate of the hierarchical principle, and who sought to maintain and extend the rights of the episcopate, learned, not without alarm, that the illustrious catechist nominated by him, had preached without his authority. He feared also that Origen might settle somewhere at a distance from the Church to which his name and fame added so much lustre. He therefore hastily recalled him, but without giving his reasons. Evidently mutual confidence no longer existed between them; a rupture might be easily brought about by the slightest misunderstanding. A short time after the appearance of his book "On the Principles," Origen —whose renown was daily augmenting, and towards whom all eyes turned in moments of difficulty, especially

* Ἔνθα καὶ διαλέγεσθαι, τὰς τε θείας ἑρμηνεύειν γραφὰς ἐπὶ τοῦ κοινοῦ της ἐκκλησίας οἱ τῇδε ἐπίσκοποι, ἀυτὸν ἠξίουν. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI.xix.)

when heresy was to be confuted, because more reliance was then placed on weighty arguments than on authoritative decisions—was called into Achaia, to confer with the false teachers who were troubling the Churches of that country. Eager to respond to so honourable an appeal, he set out for Greece, passing through Palestine and Asia Minor on his way. At Ephesus he had a conference with a Gnostic heretic. Immediately on his arrival in Cæsarea, Theophilact, the bishop of that city, and several other bishops, at whose head was Alexander of Jerusalem, urged him to receive consecration as a priest. They desired thus to confer on him the unquestionable right to preach; possibly they may have also thought to give him higher authority, in the important conferences in which he was about to take part. Origen yielded to their entreaties; he had no reason for refusing.* The various Churches already enjoyed large independence; no fixed and general rule was imposed upon them. The tendencies of the time were doubtless leading towards the introduction of universal rules, but these tendencies had not as yet gained any decisive triumph. Such times were full of difficulty for men like Origen, who ignore ecclesiastical polity, and who, holding simply by consecrated and clearly-defined ordinances, are incapable of veering round with every current, so as to please their hierarchical superiors. Origen took nothing into consideration but his rights and his duty.

As soon as the tidings of Origen's consecration reached Alexandria, Demetrius showed the strongest

* *Πρεσβυτερίου χειροθεσίαν ἐν Καισαρείᾳ πρὸς τῶν τῇδε ἐπισκόπων ἀναλαμβανει.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxiii.)

irritation, and resolved to strike a decisive blow. Origen, unconscious as yet of the storm about to break on his head, left for Greece. He made the longest sojourn at Athens, disputing there with the heretics, and probably entering into communications with the philosophers of that city, brilliant still, though fallen far from its ancient greatness. He returned to Alexandria by way of Ephesus, where he encountered fresh heretics to be refuted.* Wherever he went he left the luminous traces of his great genius. On his return to his own country, he thought quietly to resume his course of teaching, and probably to obtain from his bishop authority to preach in the church of his native city. But he found all changed; he met with coldness, mistrust, and severity, where he had always received respect and affection. He could not but perceive, from the frigid reserve of the most influential of the Alexandrine clergy, and the solitude in which he was left, that some stern measure was in preparation against him. The narrow and bigoted party in the Church had long vowed implacable enmity to him, and this was too favourable an opportunity to be let slip. It is certain that the question of doctrine, though not officially brought forward, was from this time raised against Origen, for he himself tells us that falsified reports of his conferences with the heretics were used to his detriment. The irritation of the bishop gave the impetus to a long latent opposition, which had been provoked by the boldness of his teaching and also by his great success.

* This we infer from his letter to his friends at Alexandria, in which he complains that false reports had been spread abroad of the acts of a conference held at Ephesus. ("Opera," I. 3.)

It is natural to inquire, what were the motives which suddenly inclined Demetrius to take violent measures? Must we ascribe his conduct, as Eusebius does, to mean jealousy of the moral authority and the glory of Origen?* The previous conduct of the Bishop of Alexandria does not justify such a supposition. We have seen him, up to this time, warmly favouring the teaching of Origen, placing him at eighteen years of age at the head of a School of Catechists, and recalling him from Cæsarea in the fear of losing him. It must be nevertheless acknowledged that the influence of Origen in the Eastern Church had since that time gone on augmenting to such a degree, that he was sent for from all quarters to defend the faith against the encroachments of error; and that a bishop like Demetrius, very jealous of his own authority, might take umbrage at this sort of moral episcopacy, which cast the merely official into the shade. It was not of the theologian and teacher that Demetrius—a practical man and a man of authority—was jealous, but of the counsellor of the Churches, universally consulted alike in Greece and Asia Minor.

Nor must we forget that while the influence of Origen went on increasing, his boldness as a philosopher asserted itself more and more decidedly. These two causes in combination might bring about a change in the disposition of his bishop towards him. We do not, however, regard either of these as the principal cause of the sudden severity used against Origen. Demetrius, as we have hinted, belonged to the hierarchical faction, which, especially in the larger Churches, was at that

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. viii.

time seeking to establish itself. The promptitude and strength of his protest against the consecration of Origen, sufficiently indicate his tendencies in this direction. Origen, on the other hand, without falling into the extremes of Montanism, clearly belonged to the more liberal party, which watched with uneasiness the encroachments of the episcopate, and unsparingly marked its disapproval of the ambition of the hierarchy.* The sentiments of this party were well known to Demetrius, and the consecration of his subordinate at Cæsarea, appeared to him an expression of this spirit of independence, which he was determined to crush at all costs. The act was not in itself illegal, but it boldly set at defiance all episcopal pretensions, overt or concealed; it was necessary to take immediate and prompt steps in the case of a man who exercised so important an influence as Origen. It was enough for the bishop to show such an intention in order to call into clear manifestation all the bitter feelings long secretly cherished against the great philosopher. Origen foresaw what was about to happen. After filling for so many years the post of teacher, with incomparable power, he might have gathered around him a numerous party, and sustained the contest on equal terms; he knew well that the bishops who had consecrated him would not abandon him, and could balance with their episcopal approval the episcopal censure of Demetrius. But Origen feared above all things to create a division in the Church. The interests of the faith he held more dear by far than merely personal considerations.

* It may be remembered that he compared the ambitious spirits at Ephesus to those who made merchandise in the Temple.

He was prepared to make any sacrifice rather than cause a rupture in the Church, and with a disinterestedness worthy of the highest admiration, he anticipated, by an immediate departure, the rigorous measures preparing against him. The continuance of his course of teaching he committed to his disciple Heraclas.*

Demetrius, far from being appeased by the conciliatory step taken by Origen, resolved to press forward energetically the condemnation of one whom he regarded as a rebel. He convoked a synod composed of Egyptian bishops, in which he gave seats also to the priests of his clergy. In this assembly Origen was pronounced unworthy of the office of catechist, and was excluded from the communion of the Church of Alexandria. The synod did not venture to depose him from the dignity of priest or elder of the Church of Cæsarea.† Probably some members of the convocation objected to any such interference in the internal government of another Church. Demetrius, who was determined to carry out the ends he had in view, assembled, as Pamphilus tells us, another synod, into which he admitted only his own partisans, and obtained, without deliberation, the object at which he aimed—the deposition of Origen as a priest.‡ This proceeding shows him to have been capable of very mean, ungenerous

* Τὴν ἀπ' Ἀλεξανδρείας μετανάστασιν ἔπὶ τὴν Καισορείαν ὁ Ὠριγένης ποιησαμενος, Ἡρακλᾷ τὸ τῆς κατηχήσεως διδασκαλεῖον καταλείπει. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxvi.)

† Σύνοδος ἀθροίζεται ἐπισκοπων καὶ τινων πρεσβυτέρων κατὰ Ὠριγένους. Ἡ δέ, ὡς ὁ Παμφιλός φησι, ψηφίζετά μεταστῆναι μὲν ἀπὸ Ἀλεξανδρείας τὸν Ὠριγένην καὶ μητε διατρίβειν ἐν αὐτῇ μήτε διδάσκειν, τῆς μέντοι τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου τιμῆς οὐδαμῶς αποκεκινῆσθαι. (Photius, "Codex," xviii.)

‡ Ὁ γε Δημήτριος ἅμα τισὶν επισκόποις Αἰγυπτίοις καὶ της ἱερωσύνης ἀπεκήρυξε. (Ibid.)

passions. Demetrius first brought up against Origen the imprudent act of his youth, and urged this as a reason for his exclusion from sacred orders; but he laid greatest stress on the irregularity of his consecration in the midst of a foreign Church. He doubtless pointed out that, according to the special constitution of the Church of Alexandria, this consecration gave important rights to any one possessing it, since the bishop of that city was still nominated by the free choice of the elders. It is certain that theological rancour found ample scope in these two synods; the excommunication would be inexplicable but for the presence of such a cause. All the services rendered by the great teacher were thus forgotten, and implacable hatred ruthlessly sacrificed this illustrious victim to the rising hierarchy. Origen was cut off from the Church to which he had gained so many thousands of adherents, to teach the world how much it costs to serve steadfastly the cause of liberty.

Demetrius did not rest satisfied with the twofold condemnation passed upon Origen. He hastened to make it known throughout all the Churches by letter,* and the Churches of Palestine alone took exception to the course that had been pursued by him. It was a time of poignant suffering for a man like Origen, who lived more intensely in the affections than the intellect, and who had cherished the most tender attachment to the Church which thus cast him out. He was not

* Τοῖς ἀνὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐπισκοποις καταγράφειν. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. viii.) "Qui tanta in eum debacchatus est insania ut per totum mundum super nomine ejus scriberet." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," liv.)

sustained under his sorrow by any of that false pride which resents injuries, and renders evil for evil. He detested heresy as deeply as any, and he knew well that his peculiar views were not such as to exclude him from that Christian communion, to which he clung with every fibre of his soul. There was keen anguish for him therefore in this violent severance of a tie so dear. He felt himself in the right, but that could not blunt the edge of the blow which fell upon him. No angry word, however, escaped with his expressions of sorrow, and he was greater in the day of shame and desolation, than he had ever been in the day of prosperity. We find his feelings vividly expressed in those of his writings which date from this period. We have seen that he had commenced at Alexandria, his Commentaries on the Gospel of John. The closing pages, which he penned in that city, bear the impress of the sorrow filling his soul. "I have been enabled," he says, "to reach my fifth volume on the Gospel of John, although the storm raised against me at Alexandria threatened to hinder; but Jesus spoke with authority to the floods and to the sea."* In this fifth volume on St. John, Origen feels already compelled to say something in self-vindication. He replies indirectly to the narrow-minded Christians who accuse him of writing too many books, by showing that he who teaches always the same truth writes in reality only one book; that it is not the multiplicity of writings, but the promulgation of conflict-

* Μεχρι γε τοῦ πέμπτου τόμου ει' καὶ ὁ κατὰ τὴν 'Αλεξανδρείαν χειμὼν αντιπράττειν, ἐδόκει, τὰ διδόμενα ὑπηγορεύσαμεν, ἐπιτιμῶντος τοῖς ἀνέμοις καὶ τοῖς κύμασι τῆς θαλάσσης τοῦ 'Ιησοῦ. ("In Johann.," VI. Vol. IV. 101.)

ing ideas, which is matter for regret; and, finally, that it is dangerous to deprive the soul and mind of Christians of wholesome nourishment, lest they have recourse to the too plentiful and poisonous food of heresy. "Hence," he adds, "it seems to me necessary, that he who can without deceit or prevarication stand forth as the defender of the Church, and refute those who are imbued with erroneous notions, should do battle with heresy."* He did not yet know, when he wrote these touching, earnest words, that he was himself treated as a heretic, and that the happy days were passed, when, as in his youth, orthodoxy was still broad enough to tolerate diversity of theology in the unity of the faith.

He could not, in his exile, at once recover calmness of spirit enough to resume his labours. It was only at the instance of Ambrose that he set himself again to his Commentaries on St. John. He thought, with reason, that great buildings cannot be reared in the stress of the storm; that there must be a time of rest and quiet to allow their foundations to settle.† He desired therefore to await the return of serenity and peace in his soul, before he resumed his labours on the construction of the great theological monument which he had begun to raise. It was not long before he recovered that which he sought, as he thus himself tells us: "After I had left Egypt," he says in his Commentary on St. John, "like Israel delivered by God, the enemy assailed me with the utmost violence by fresh letters, altogether contrary to the Gospel, and stirred up

* Ἀναγκαιόν μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι τὸν δυνάμενον πρεσβεύειν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ λόγου ἀπαραχαράκτως ἵστασθαι κατὰ τῶν αἱρετικῶν ἀναπλασματων. ("In Johann.," VI. Vol. IV. 100.) Ibid.

against me all the winds of Egypt."* Origen thought it best to pause till this first agitation, which troubled his thoughts and rendered him inapt for commenting on Divine truth, had passed away. "Now," he continues, "that the fiery darts aimed at me have failed—for God Himself has quenched them—now that my soul is grown accustomed to that which it is to suffer for the Word of God, I ought to bear more easily the onslaught of my enemies. Having recovered some composure of mind, I will not defer to resume the course of my labours. I ask God, who vouchsafes to enlighten the sanctuary of my soul, to aid me so that I may complete the edifice of my Commentaries on St. John." Could he possibly have spoken more generously of his adversaries, or sought more worthy consolation for himself?

A letter from Origen to his friends at Alexandria has come down to us; it shows the same forgetfulness of injuries, the same absence of a revengeful spirit, the same charity, accompanied with the keen sense of the injustice done him. "Is it needful," he exclaims, "to call to your minds the discourses of the prophets, in which they so often reprove the pastors and elders of the people, its priests and its princes? You can for yourselves search them out in the sacred Scriptures, and clearly discern that the time is come of which it is said, 'Trust not in any friend; put not your confidence in princes.' Now is fulfilled the oracle: 'The rulers of my people have forgotten me; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they know not.' We ought

* Ἔπειτα τοῦ ἐχθροῦ πικρότατα ἡμῶν καταστρατευσαμένου διὰ τῶν καινῶν αὐτοῦ γραμμάτων. ("In Johann.," VI. Vol. IV. 101.)

much rather to feel pity than hatred for them, and pray for them rather than revile them. We have been called unto blessing, not unto cursing."* Origen then reminds his readers that the Archangel Michael would not curse even the devil, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee!" "Now," he says, "we cannot know whether God did curse him or how He curses." Again he says: "Little sins as well as great draw down condemnation upon us. It is written that neither drunkards nor revilers shall inherit the kingdom of God. Let us, then, seek to do all things prudently; drinking with sobriety, speaking with moderation, so as to revile no man." "I marvel not," he adds, alluding to the calumnious charges brought against himself, "that my enemies distort my doctrine: have not even the letters of Paul been wrested?"† Origen never swerved from this Christian magnanimity, and he remains the model of the theologian persecuted by haughty bigotry. Gentle as Fénélon under hierarchical anathemas, he maintained his convictions without faltering, and neither retracted nor rebelled.

Epiphanes, the passionate enemy of every one on whom rested the shadow of heresy, sought to blacken the reputation of Origen by a vile slander, relating to his departure from Alexandria. He asserted that he had been carried before the altar of the false gods, and that the choice had been offered him between an impious sacrifice and an act of abomination. Origen, it

* "Quorum magis misereri quam eos odisse debemus, et orare pro illis, quam eis maledicere. Ad benedicendum enim et non ad maledicendum creati sumus." ("Epist. Origen ad Amic. Alexand.," I. 3.)

† Ibid.

was said, preferring purity to fidelity, had fallen into apostasy.* This story will not bear a moment's examination, and is unsupported by any direct testimony. It has all the weight of moral probability against it, and is emphatically belied by the welcome given to Origen by the Churches of Palestine. It was at Cæsarea he was to attain his full maturity of mental power, and to write his greatest works.

He had not as yet trodden the soil rendered sacred by the great scenes of the world's redemption. He had long had a great desire to visit these spots, so hallowed in history. He sought to drink deeply into the spirit of that glorious past, and to revive his drooping courage by meditating, in view of Calvary, on the cost of serving faithfully a despised cause. This journey was also to assist him in his labours, by permitting him to see with his own eyes those towns and villages of Galilee, where the Divine words were spoken which were the subject of his Commentaries. He delivered several homilies at Jerusalem before Bishop Alexander, taking for his text the first book of Samuel. His later Commentaries bear many traces of this journey; he rectifies some received opinions by information acquired on the scenes of the sacred story.†

After a short sojourn in Palestine, he settled at Cæsarea, and there recommenced his labours. His new school soon became as flourishing as that at Alexandria. Once again, wealth, intellectual and moral power, and earnest piety, acknowledged the attraction of his teaching. But quiet studies could not be long pursued in this period of conflict. The

* Epiphanes, "Hæres.," lxiv. † Redepenning, "Origen," II. 7, 8.

persecution which burst forth under Maximinus broke up the gatherings of master and disciples.* Origen had the grief of seeing his friend Ambrose cast into prison. He wrote to him on this occasion his treatise on Martyrdom, in which we catch the prolonged echo of the manly words, which in childhood he sent to his captive father: "Flinch not for us!"

Origen found a place of refuge in Cappadocia, first with Bishop Firmilianus, then in the house of a rich lady named Juliana, who had inherited the library of Symmachus, the Syriac translator of the Old Testament. This was a rich resource for Origen. He passed two years in this retirement, and it was from thence he wrote his treatise on Prayer, in which, after setting forth that which might be called the general theory of prayer, and showing how it practically solves the great duality of Divine grace and human freedom, he gives an eloquent paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. It is interesting to trace in this composition, the thoughts which were pressing on his own mind at the time. Was he not thinking of all the persecutions of which he had just been the subject, when he so earnestly urged on Christians forgetfulness of injuries? "Let us remember," he says, "all our offences against God, how we have added sin to sin by our words, by our ignorance of the truth, by our murmurings at that which has befallen us."† It was a delicate and generous manner of humbling himself for the errors which might have crept into his doctrine. Everything in this treatise is adapted to a time of persecution. Origen revived the courage of the Christians by setting before them the example of the

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxviii. † Origen, "De Oratione," xxviii.

great sufferer of the Old Testament, Job, whom he well styles the athlete of virtue.* Finally, he comforts the Church—well-nigh overwhelmed with tribulation and anguish—by the sublime thought of the mysterious bond, which in these dark days links it to the blessed and to the angels. "The first of Christian virtues," says Origen, "being charity towards our neighbour, must we not believe that the saints in bliss have even a greater love for their brethren who struggle and suffer in this present life, than those can have who are still compassed with human infirmity? Are they not our heavenly allies in the great warfare? It is not here below alone that we may say: 'If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.' It is meet that glorified love should in its turn say with St. Paul: 'I have upon me the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' Has not Christ Himself said that He is bound in the person of His prisoners?" † Thus the Christian captive sees beside him not alone his gaolers and the rough soldiers to whom he is bound; he feels himself in the company also of angels and of the blessed, and in the beautiful figure used by Origen, the ladder of light which Jacob saw, comes down to him from heaven in the hour of prayer.

The persecution under Maximinus having ceased at his death in the year 238, Origen returned to Cæsarea. We find him soon after at Nicomedia, where he had a conference with a heretic named Bassus. His letter to

* Origen says, in speaking of the defeat of Satan by Job: *Νενικημένος ὑπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀθλητοῦ.* ("De Oratione," xxviii.)

† Ibid., xii.

Julius Africanus was written in consequence of this conference, to justify himself to that teacher for the use he had made in the discussion of the apocryphal book of Susannah. It cannot be denied that in this exegetical controversy, Julius Africanus was the defender of the cause of truth, in opposition to Origen, who was much too docile to ecclesiastical tradition on this particular point. We do not know what circumstance led him again to Athens. It was in that city—where St. Paul's penetrating eye had discerned, in the inscription over the altar of the unknown God, the dim yearning of the pagan breast after the religion of Christ—that Origen wrote the most poetical of his works, his "Commentary on the Song of Songs."* Regarding the human soul as the bride of the Word, for whom it had been created, he interprets the brilliant measures of the Hebrew poet as the tender and passionate expression of the yearnings of conscience after the heavenly Bridegroom. The same spirit which animated Paul's sermon at Athens breathes in these pages, in which the paraphrase rises to the height of inspired poetry.

On his return to Cæsarea, Origen zealously pursued his exegetical labours. It was at this time he completed his "Commentary on St. John," and continued or commenced his commentaries on the other Gospels and the Epistles; those which he wrote on Isaiah and Ezekiel belong also to this period.† One very remarkable circumstance gave fresh proof of the weight of his moral influence in the Church. A heresy, which threatened to become dangerous, had just manifested

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxxii. † Ibid., VI. xxviii.

itself at Bostra in Arabia. It originated with Beryl, the bishop of that city, who had fallen into serious error. He denied the distinction of the Divine persons, and regarded Jesus Christ as nothing more than the perfect manifestation of the one God. He had been led to this idea, which assailed the very foundations of the Christian doctrine, by the exaggerated views of an opposite character, maintained by the sect of the Ecelsaites —an offshoot of ancient Essenism. The development of the faith had not been sound and well-balanced in these regions. Although Paul, immediately on his conversion, had preached the Gospel to the nomad tribes of Arabia, the ascetic and theosophic Judaism of the Essenes had always exerted the paramount influence in that country. The combination of a narrow mind and an ardent imagination must infallibly result in dangerous errors. Thus, Christianity had early assumed strange and incongruous forms on these hot desert sands. The distinction of the Divine personalities had become a coarse tritheism. The Bishop of Bostra, in opposing this error, which amounted to a return to polytheism, had assailed the great dogma of the Incarnation, denying the pre-existence of the Word, and consequently the full Divinity of Jesus Christ. A synod had been called to confirm or reject his doctrine, and he had been condemned; but he was not disposed to yield, and a schism was imminent. The bishops who had taken part in the synod were his judges, not his enemies. They sincerely desired to bring him back into the right path, for his piety and uprightness were beyond question. They thought they could not do better than commit this noble task to the great excommunicated teacher of

Alexandria. They felt that if free persuasion was to be substituted for external authority, there was no man so fit as Origen to lead back into the true faith a sincere, though erring soul. Himself a sufferer from hierarchical censure, his sympathy might be relied on; he would be no organ of the decrees of council, but would enter into the contest with fair and equal weapons. In truth, he was all the greater for that in which he seemed to be lacking; his power was in his weakness, for all that is subtracted of external and coercive force, is so much added to the force of persuasion. "Origen," says Eusebius, "after holding some free conversation with Beryl, in order rightly to understand his views, and after inquiring into his error, convinced him by argument, and by fair discussion took him as it were by the hand, and led him back into the way of truth."* Abundant success thus crowned the mission of Origen, and the Church might learn from the example of this restored heretic, the uselessness of coercive measures and the power of free persuasion. Would to God she had remembered this in all her conflicts against error—conflicts so often rendered of no avail by the contrary mode of procedure! A short time subsequently, a new heresy broke forth in Arabia, the substance of which was that the human body would be destroyed at death, to be created a second time at the resurrection. Origen was charged by the bishops of the country, to refute publicly this opinion in a synod convened for the purpose. He was

* Ὡς δὲ ἔγνω ὅ τι καὶ λέγοι, εὐθύνας μὴ ὀρθοδοξοῦντα λογοσμῷ τε πείσας καὶ ἀποδείξει ἀναλαβὼν αὐτόν. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxxiii.) Redepenning has treated very completely all that relates to this discussion. ("Origen," II. 74.)

no less successful in this honourable mission. "He argued," says Eusebius, "with such force that he led the heretics to repudiate their error."* The two dialogues on the Resurrection, which are ascribed to him by St. Jerome, may have been written on this occasion.†

The empire had passed, in the year 244, from Gordian the Younger to Philip the Arabian, his prætorian prefect. This prince, violent and cruel in his general conduct, showed himself well-disposed towards the Christians. If his conversion to Christianity must be regarded as fabulous, it is none the less certain that he was, like Alexander Severus, a protector of the proscribed religion, probably through the same sort of religious eclecticism, which did not, however, exert the same restraining influence over his moral character. Origen addressed a letter to him, as well as to his wife, Severa, designed doubtless to make him better acquainted with a religion to which he showed a favour at that time very rare.‡

During this period of calm in the Church's history, Origen wrote his great apologetic work. Versed as he was in the philosophy of his time, he knew well all it had to urge in objection to the new religion. He knew that its attacks tended to become every day more violent; his ear was open to its derisive laughter, no less than to its passionate accusations. For many years he had been replying to both in the course of his teaching. The moment was come to bind together

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxxvii.
† Apud Rufin., "Adv. Hieronym., invectiv.," II.
‡ Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxvi.

in one all the arguments which he had so often presented, and to plead broadly before the world the cause of Christianity. He had himself arrived at his full maturity of mind and soul, and, the master of his age no less in knowledge than in faith, he could draw from the rich treasury of his vast erudition. He had now the vigour of ripe manhood, while he still retained the fire of youth. The enemies whom he sought to combat were perfectly known to him, and he was wanting in no weapon needed for the fight. The Church had never yet had a defender so thoroughly armed. He was not the young Hebrew shepherd going forth to meet the giant with a sling and a stone; he was a mighty man of valour, handling all the weapons of his adversaries, and surpassing them in knowledge and dialectic skill, while, nevertheless, he cherished in his heart that which constituted the true strength of David—a deep and true faith, a child-like confidence in God. The philosopher whose attacks he repels, seems to have lived under Marcus Aurelius, and to have professed rather a vague eclecticism than any settled doctrine. Origen chose to reply especially to Celsus, because this opponent had the art of combining in his book all the charges brought against Christianity, whether coming from Judaism or Paganism. He had allowed no insinuation to pass unrecorded—neither the calumnies of popular superstition, nor the sophistries of the schools. Origen's book, "Contra Celsum," had thus the advantage of encountering anti-Christianity under all its forms, and overthrowing it with a single blow. Written very rapidly, at the pressing instance of Ambrose, it has no regular method. Origen wished

to re-write it, but time failed him. It remains, nevertheless, the master-piece of ancient apology, for solidity of basis, vigour of argument, and breadth of eloquent exposition. The apologists of every age were to find in it an inexhaustible mine, as well as an incomparable model of that royal, moral method inaugurated by St. Paul and St. John, which alone can answer its end, because it alone carries the conflict into the heart and conscience, to the very centre, that is, of the higher life in man.

Origen gives evidence in this work, as in all that he did, of the high tone of feeling by which he was animated. "God grant," he wrote, at the close of his fourth book, "in the name of His Son, who is God, who is the Word, wisdom, truth, righteousness, that, enlightened by this Divine Word, I may order, and happily achieve my fifth book, for the greatest good of my readers."* Again he says: "May it please God that I may with my word penetrate the conscience of those who have read Celsus, and draw forth the dart with which every one is wounded who is not armed with the love of God, and pour into the wound the balm which is able to heal!"† No intellectual advantage could have taken the place of an inspiration so pure and elevated; it added to the force of the argument used to convince, the force of the love which constrains.

We have now reached the culminating point in the career of Origen. The larger part of his great works are completed; he is in all the fulness of his noble faculties. This is the moment to estimate, not his theological system—an exposition of which would be out

* "Contra Celsum," IV. xcix. † Ibid., V. i.

of place here—but the qualities and defects of his great mind in religious philosophy, in his exegesis of the sacred books, and in his general teaching. Origen possessed in the highest degree breadth of thought; he desired to bring under the dominion of Christ all the spheres of knowledge—the past of humanity, as well as its future. But it may be asked, did he achieve all that he desired? or, did he not more than once fall under the influence of the very errors which he aimed to confute? It seems to us evident that if he was right in recognising, with Clement, the providential mission of the ancient philosophy, he nevertheless gave too large a place to it in his system. The mantle of the Platonist philosopher too often conceals the Christian, and he bears too plainly the marks of the disciple of Ammonius Saccas.

The great reproach to be brought against him, as against the Platonic philosophy in all its forms, is an undue depreciation of the real, the tendency to an excessive idealism, which distorts that which it seeks to transfigure, and which, starting from the rejection or condemnation of the corporeal element, concludes with despising all realities—all facts, that is to say—and substituting for them chimeras or dreams. The ideal world, peopled with the phantoms of a speculative imagination, is preferred to the Divine creation, in which the true ideal appears clothed in the vesture of the real. This tendency, recognisable even in Plato himself, reaches its ultimatum in Neo-Platonism, and in the Gnosticism of the time, and although in Origen it was restrained by very positive beliefs, it nevertheless exerted over him a great and lamentable influence. He

himself treated with too much scorn, not only the corporeal element for which he always professed a truly Platonic repugnance, but real facts also. Hence the strange transformations which he causes to pass upon Christian doctrine and the Gospel history. He constantly forsakes the *terra firma* of fact, to soar into the cloudy region of allegory. Hence, also, the capital error of his system of interpretation, his famous theory of the triple meaning of Scripture. Distinguishing between the literal, the typical, and the remote signification, he avails himself of inexhaustible resources to escape the difficulties of the text, and does not see that he often misses the true treasure it contains, and reads a Bible of his own invention—a human book within the Book of God. It is vain for him to liken literal interpretation to Lot's wife changed into a pillar of salt; it is, after all, more beautiful and more fruitful than the allegorical, which might be more fairly compared to the carrying of a pagan statue into the temple of God, so much does it facilitate the intrusion of alien conceptions into the true worship. It was, doubtless, highly agreeable to Origen to dispose of the polygamy of the patriarchs, by saying that each new wife taken by them represented the acquirement of some new virtue,* but this same system of interpretation often led him to miss obvious and important meanings. He complains that the friends of the letter have mixed sand with the pure stream of his allegorical exegesis, like the Philistines who filled up the wells of Isaac,† and he never dreams that of all the forces which dry up the

* Origen, "Opera," II. 91.
† "In Gen.," Hom. XIII. "Opera," II. 95.

fountain of truth, none is so effectual as exaggerated allegorism.

This tendency to idealise would have been yet more fatal in its effect on Origen had it not been modified by the earnestness of his belief. He was kept in the right line of the Christian faith by the depth of his religious feeling. Although he was beyond question one of the most learned men of his age, he never bowed the knee before that idol of science which was then worshipped by Greek philosophy and exalted by Gnostic heresy. He ever put conscience above science, and moral freedom circulates like a life-giving current through all his system. He was its most ardent and able champion. His ideal of liberty was not that of the Pagan or the Pelagian, which is nothing better than a challenge flung by the creature at the Creator, and the insurrection of a pride no less impotent than insolent. Liberty, as he conceives of it, is the first of the gifts of God; it is real only in so far as it is verified and made fruitful by Him, and the first work of Christ was to restore it. Origen never wandered from the path of true Christian theism. We feel that to this his heart bound him, and that his belief was on this point the expression of his religious life. We need say no more than we have already said of the elevation and nobility of his character, nor of that noble passion for the ideal which consumed him. We will content ourselves with quoting two or three passages from his writings, which show what was the animating spirit of his theology.

In one of his Commentaries on the Psalms, he de-

clares that ignorance is preferable to false science, that the just man who knows nothing of human sciences is a far higher being than he who knows all, and knows not God.* He desires, however, that the Christian should feel a noble ardour after truth. "If," he says, "the Christian can learn to know equally well the Old and New Testament, so as to give an account of all that is written, he will be truly rich in every good word and work." Origen, as we know, spared himself no labour to attain to the possession of these highest riches. We have described his sleepless vigils, passed in the pursuit of all the knowledge possible to be gained, but even more worthy of admiration is the scrupulous conscientiousness which he carried into his investigations. He constantly referred to Jews upon questions of their tongue. He spared neither toil nor trouble to ascertain the meaning of a difficult passage. He studied sacred geography in Palestine itself. One day, desiring to know the name of a tree mentioned in the Bible, he took some boughs to some Jews of his acquaintance, that they might inform him correctly about it.†

Never in all his vast studies did he lose sight of the sacred end of all religious knowledge, never did he become self-elated. "If a man," he says in one of his homilies on Genesis, "puts out to sea in a little boat, he at first fears nothing so much as grazing on the shallow shore; but when he has presently come into

* "Melius est ergo hoc modicum fidei justo super divitias peccatorum multas quas habent in eloquentia ac sapientia hujus seculi." ("Opera," II. 666.)

† *Οὐκ ὀλίγοις Ἑβραίοις ἀνεθέμην πυνθανόμενος.* ("Epist. ad Afric.," vi. "Opera," I. xviii.)

deep waters, when the big waves swell around him, sometimes tossing him on their seething crests, sometimes plunging him into the deeps, then a great fear comes upon him, seeing that he has committed himself in so frail a skiff on to such stormy seas. Such are we, we who, utterly devoid of merit, have dared to launch our feeble mind upon this great sea of Divine mysteries. But if through our prayers our sails are filled with the favouring winds of the Holy Spirit, we shall arrive safe in port."* He put all his trust in the invocation of Divine aid. "Study," he said, "will not suffice for the learning of the Holy Scriptures; we must entreat God day and night, in order that the Lion of the tribe of Judah may come to us and deign to open the seal of the Book."†

He repeatedly commends himself to the prayers of his hearers. "This passage of Scripture," we read in a homily on Leviticus, "is very hard to explain, but we shall be able to interpret it if you ask God, the Father of the Word, to enlighten us."‡ He never belies this humility, and in his boldest speculations betrays none of the pride of intellect. "Would to God," he exclaims, "that I might pass for mad in the eyes of the unbelieving!"§ A profound and reverent love for the Word inspired all his theology; it was

* "Ita etiam nos pati videmur, qui exigui mentis et ingenio tenues, iniri tam vastum mysteriorum pelagus audemus." ("In Gen.," Hom. II. i. "Opera," II. 84.)

† "Supplicandum domino et diebus ac noctibus obsecrandum." ("In Exod.," xii. 4. "Opera." II. 174.)

‡ "Ipso donante poterit explicari." ("In Levit.," Hom. XII. iv. "Opera," II. 25.)

§ "Utinam ab infidelibus stultus dicar." ("In Luc.," Hom. VII. "Opera," III. 390.)

because he loved that he longed so much to know, and all his knowledge he sought to gain by love.

In his "Commentary on St. John," he has himself given us the secret of this high theology. "I think," he says, in reference to the last supper, "that there is a symbol in the fact that John leaned on the bosom of Jesus. It signifies that having given himself to the Word, and having plunged into its depths, he was in the bosom of the eternal Word, as that Word Himself was in the bosom of the Father."* Such was the sublime conception which Origen cherished of Christian knowledge. He would that it should lean upon the breast of Christ, that by love it might fathom the mysteries of the hidden wisdom of God. If in his desire to magnify Divine love, he went so far as to declare the ultimate restoration of all things, with an assurance not warranted by Scripture, such universalism as he professed can never be placed on the same level with those convenient systems which sacrifice the moral law; for that law is the constant pivot of all his ideas, and however large a reserve we make for his errors, he yet remains the ideal of the Christian theologian. Realising all that he teaches, carrying into his speculations the fire of an ardent conviction, ambitious of knowledge, not through pride but through genuine love of truth, he unites the breadth of a great mind to the austerity of an ascetic life. He shows himself ready to seal his faith by an ignominious death, no less than

* Τὸ συμβολικὸν τοῦτο περὶστησιν, ὅτι Ἰωάννης ἀνακείμενος τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τοῖς μυστικωτέροις ἐναπανύμενος ἀνέκειτο ἐν τοῖς κόλποις τοῦ λόγου ἀνάλογον τῷ καὶ αὐτὸν εἶναι ἐν τοῖς κόλποις τοῦ πάτρος. ("In Johann," Hom. XXXII. "Opera," IV. 431.)

to suffer for it the painful persecution inflicted on him within the Church by sectarian narrowness; and under this double martyrdom he remains invariably faithful to the truth which has taken full possession of his soul.

If after thus regarding him as a theologian, we pass to his character as a master and professor, we shall not enter at all into the substance of his teaching, which would lead us back into theology, but shall speak of the impression produced by him upon his disciples. In this respect we have not to rely on historical inferences, which may be more or less exact; we have a direct testimony. A young disciple of Origen, who long listened to his instruction at Cæsarea, and who became subsequently illustrious in the Church under the name of Gregory Thaumaturgus, has left us the vivid expression of his admiration for the great teacher, in a farewell address, delivered when he was on the eve of returning to his own country.* This address, though slightly over-emphatic, and bearing throughout the impress of juvenile enthusiasm, gives us the plan of Origen's teaching. It shows over what a vast field he led his disciples, in order to bring them gradually to the highest verities of the Christian religion. He began by thoroughly examining the ground into which the seed was to be cast, that he might know its advantages and its deficiencies. By free intercourse, he made himself familiar with the intellectual and moral condition of those who came to sit at his feet. "Like a skilful husbandman, he did not pause at that which is visible and superficial, but delved into the soil to discover what

* This address is inserted in the fourth volume of the works of Origen, p. 55 of the Appendix.

it concealed, putting questions and problems, and waiting our replies."* He did not enter on his regular teaching till after this preliminary examination. He sought first to give an exact definition of the terms used in the school, being assured that his task would be thus simplified, and many misunderstandings avoided. By this very simple means he rectified the ideas of his hearers on some important points, and trained their minds to the severe forms of sound logic. From dialectics he passed to the natural sciences, mathematics, and astronomy. He doubtless fell into some of the errors of his time, but in spite of his imperfect knowledge, he elicited immortal truths, showing the miracle of Divine wisdom in creation.† He was impatient to rise from this lower world, however beautiful, to the higher sphere in which reigns the law of liberty. To moral science he devoted peculiar care. He established the notion of the essential good, and showed how this found its realisation in the four great virtues enumerated by Plato; but he breathed into this old form the new and Divine breath of the Gospel, and gave a unity to the idea of the four virtues, by making them all converge to the virtue in which all others meet—the love of God.

When he had thus prepared the mind of his disciple, Origen bade him launch on to the wide sea of human opinions. "He desired him to devote himself to philosophy, and not to neglect either the ancient poets or the ancient philosophers, rejecting absolutely the

* *Κατανοῶν, οὐ τὰ πᾶσιν ὁρώμενα, ἀνορύττων, ἐρωτῶν καὶ προτείνων.* (Origen, "Opera," IV., Append., 66.)

† *Ἱερᾶς οἰκονομίας θαῦμα.* (Ibid., 67.)

books of atheists alone. This profound investigation of the whole of ancient literature, pursued under the direction of such a master, led the disciple to form for himself a general judgment of antiquity, a just and equitable appreciation of its religious and philosophical systems. "He himself," says Gregory, "went before us, and led us by the hand along the path to be pursued. His practical eye discovered error, however subtle; but he pointed out with joy the truths which might be discerned through it. Finally, after having thus, to good purpose, detained his disciples awhile in the porch of the sanctuary, he led them within, and opened to them the temple of the Scriptures, urging them to give heed only to God and to His prophets."* All his theology was based upon Scripture; he simply commented on the sacred text, but he did so with such authority, that Gregory recognises the same spirit in the word of the interpreter of the prophets as in the prophets themselves.†

That which constituted the power of this teaching was not its marvellous art, nor its elevation, nor its science; it was the personal influence of the master himself. Gregory is never weary of this theme; he delights to paint in brightest colours his first impressions on listening to Origen. He had come to Cæsarea from a remote district of Pontus, accompanying his sister, who was married to a magistrate of that city. He purposed to stay there only a few days, but he was enchained, as was also his brother, who travelled with him, by the eloquent and persuasive words of Origen.

* Μόνῳ δὲ προσέχειν Θεῷ, καὶ τοῖς τούτου προφήταις. (Origen, "Opera," IV., Append., 74.)

† Ibid.

Origen first won them over to the study of philosophy, which he recommended to them in general but pressing terms; then he led them on to that sublime philosophy of Christ, which was to him the one absolute truth. It was not so much his eloquence as his moral influence which led them to renounce at once, country, family, and the legal studies they had already commenced, and which opened to them honourable prospects in life. They could not but yield to that strange fascination which Origen exercised upon all who approached him, to that indescribable constraining power which emanated from the Divine within him.* "Love for him," says Gregory, "was like an arrow which fixed itself deep in the heart, and could not be drawn out, or like a spark setting the soul on fire."† In listening to him, philosophy, and especially he who taught it, seemed to be preferred above all beside, and this because of the marvellous agreement between his doctrine and his life. He did not teach morals by words alone, but by deeds. He stimulated to good even more by that which he wrought than by that which he taught.‡ "We," says Gregory, "were neither just, nor temperate, nor endowed with any virtue; but this noble man, whose soul was full of the love of all goodness, made us love it with a great love. He constrained us to admire the beauty of righteousness in all its purity."§ Such teaching was admirably adapted to enrich and render fruitful the souls and minds of those by whom

* Οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως σύν τινι θείᾳ δονάμει. (Origen, "Opera," IV. Append., 64.) † Φιλίας ἡμῖν κέντρον ἐνέσκηψεν. (Ibid.) ‡ Ibid., 68. § Τῆς δικαιοσύνης, ἣς τὸ χρύσεον ὄντως ἔδειξεν ἡμῖν πρόσωπον. (Ibid., 71.)

it was received. They gathered more from it than mere varied knowledge; it left deep in their hearts living seeds, which would be developed in places remote from the influence of the master.* The thought of this result was Gregory's consolation in parting from Origen, after the most pathetic of farewells.

The great qualities of the catechist were to be equally conspicuous in the preacher. Origen, from the time when he was raised to the office of elder at Cæsarea, preached regularly in that city. Numerous homilies delivered by him have been preserved. He preached from the Gospel of the day, or upon the portion of Scripture which had been read before the assembly. Following the ancient usage of the Church, the Scriptures thus publicly read were consecutive, so that each book was perused entire. Origen never took a single passage for a text; he expounded an entire period. He commenced with the explanation of the passage, and then proceeded to its application. His great aim was spiritual edification.† His tone was usually calm, his language neither brilliant nor passionate; he had not the forcible eloquence of Tertullian, but on the other hand he used no false arts of rhetoric. When the subject demands it, he is capable of much elevation, and his style is rich and full. His imagination diffuses a soft and equal light over his discourses, rather than those brilliant gleams which produce more immediate but less lasting effect. He exhibits no trace

* "Εστιν ἡμῖν σπέρματα. (Origen, "Opera," IV., Append., 77.)

† "Quæ ad ædificationem pertinent proferentes." ("In Levit.," Hom. I.)

of that false priestly assumption, which seeks to impose the truths it feels itself incapable of communicating by persuasion. He plainly avows his own weakness, and, as we have seen, humbly entreats the prayers of his hearers. Such simple, earnest words, spoken with transparent sincerity, are sure to find their way to the heart, while the same truths, arrayed in a vain pomp of verbiage, or upheld by an unjust assumption of authority, die away without awaking any echo in the soul. As we read the homilies of Origen, we feel ourselves constantly brought into contact with a rare Christian, one who knows that true greatness consists in self-forgetfulness.

The time was at hand when Origen was to be withdrawn from a sphere of activity so rich and fruitful. He was ready to endure the trial of suffering as nobly as he had already endured the yet more testing ordeal of outward tranquillity. A short time before the peace of the Church was broken, he wrote the following words, which show his disposition of mind: "For ourselves, we are ready to undergo persecution, whenever God shall permit the adversary to stir it up against us. So long as God allows us to enjoy exemption from such trial, and to lead a life of tranquillity, strange in the midst of a world which hates us,* we will commit ourselves to Him who said, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' But if it is His will that we should have to fight and to suffer for the cause of piety, we will meet all the assaults of the enemy with these words: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.'"†

* Καὶ ἐν μισοῦντι ἡμᾶς τῷ κοσμῳ παραδόξως εἰρήνην ἄγομεν. ("Contra Celsum," VIII. 70.)

† Ibid.

It was not long before the possibility thus anticipated became a reality. The terrible persecution which stained the reign of Decius, was, as we know, aggravated by the tortures which the emperor commanded as a means of compelling the Christians to apostatise. Origen retired to Tyre as soon as the decree was promulgated throughout the cities and villages. This was a last concession to Christian prudence, for he was too well known at Cæsarea not to be at once marked out as the first victim for the new sacrifice. It was impossible that he should escape a persecution so general and so violent. The desire of his youth was at length granted; it was given him to suffer for the cause of Christ, without the possibility of his incurring the charge of temerity. He had scrupulously conformed to the will of the Master, who counselled flight where it was possible. He now welcomed with pure and holy joy the ignominies and tortures laid upon him for his faith. The persecutors spent all their fury upon the venerable man, whose body was worn and wasted by asceticism, and by the vast and incessant labours of his life.* He was not only loaded with chains, but exposed to divers tortures. He was cast into the deepest dungeon, an iron collar was hung around his neck, and his feet were crushed for four days in the stocks.† He was constantly reminded of the fiery death awaiting him, but he stood firm under all agonies and threats. His persecutors, however, by a last refinement of cruelty, did not send him to the stake, imagining that they could thus deprive him of the crown of martyr-

* Τοῦ πονηροῦ δαίμονος ἐφαμίλλως τῷ ἀνδρὶ πανστρατιᾷ παραταξαμένου. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxxix.)

† Ibid.

dom.* Spent as he was by so much suffering, Origen had still strength to address words of consolation to his brethren.† His last thought was for them, and he died as he had lived, as ardent for the cross of Christ under his crown of hoary hairs, as he had been in his early youth. His tomb was long preserved at Tyre. His name was graven on a monument more durable than marble—in the hearts of his disciples; and in spite of the controversies to which his system was to give occasion, and the passionate party spirit it was to excite, he has left the memory of one of the greatest theologians and greatest saints the Church has ever possessed. One of his own words strikes the key-note of his life. "Love," he says again and again, "is an agony, a passion: *Caritas est passio.*" ‡ To love the truth so as to suffer for it in the world and in the Church; to love mankind with a tender sympathy; to extend the arms of compassion ever more widely, so as to overpass all barriers of dogmatic difference, under the far-reaching impulse of this pitying love; to realise that the essence of love is sacrifice, and to make self the unreserved and willing victim,—such was the creed, such was the life of Origen.

§ III. *The Fathers of the Eastern Church, from Origen to Constantine.*

The influence of the illustrious Alexandrine had gone on constantly extending and consolidating, in spite of the condemnation of his bishop—an indubitable

* Μηδαμῶς αὐτὸν ἀνελειν παντὶ σθένει δικαστοῦ φιλονείκως ἐνστάντος. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xl.)

† Ibid.

‡ "In Ezechiel," Hom. VI. "Opera," III. 379.

evidence that he had not, with all his boldness, departed from what may be called the dogmatic standard of his age. He lost his cause only before a tribunal not competent to try it. The more rigid orthodoxy of a later date applied to him its own measure, and passed on him one of those retro-active judgments which are the gross injustices of history. The number and quality of his disciples are alone enough to establish his justification. The greater part of them were placed at the head of important Churches, which abundantly proves that they were not regarded as schismatics or heretics. The esteem in which they were held reflected honour upon their master, and vindicated him from the charges of Demetrius. The Eastern Church of the third century cancelled, in fact, the sentence passed upon Origen under the influence of the hierarchical party. At Alexandria itself, his disciples maintained the pre-eminence, and at the death of Demetrius, Heraclas, who had been the most intimate friend and trusted disciple of Origen, was raised to the episcopal dignity by the free choice of the elders. This election explains why Demetrius had taken care to exclude his clergy from the synod, from which he meant to extort the condemnation of the illustrious catechist. The majority in this leading council of the Church was on the side of Origen, and though it was for a moment taken by surprise, and held in subjection by the authority of the bishop, it rapidly returned to its true opinions. Heraclas, a pagan by birth, had been attached to Origen from his earliest years. He was the brother of that Plutarch who nearly involved his master in his own martyrdom.

We know that the furious populace attributed the death of Plutarch to the master who had taught him such unshaken devotedness and heroic fidelity. Heraclas and Plutarch were among those pagans who, by their earnest questions and their thirst after the highest truth, had induced the young and brilliant professor of grammar to devote to sacred literature a course of instruction designed at first to be secular. Heraclas, after attending for some time the school of Ammonius Saccas, soon became the colleague of Origen, who confided to him the preparatory class of his disciples, and thus gave the strongest pledge of his confidence in him. The assurance that he was leaving his school in such hands, on his departure for Palestine, softened the bitterness of his exile, and not long after, he had the consolation of seeing his teaching vindicated in the most marked manner, in the very city where he had been condemned. The elevation to the bishopric of his most familiar disciple, his second self, was a sufficient reply to all the accusations against him. We have few details of the bishopric of Heraclas. We know only that he always maintained the same spirit of free inquiry, and cherished the same desire to be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines of his opponents, which had led him to attend the school of the pagan philosopher, Ammonius Saccas. In fact, Dionysius of Alexandria informs us that Heraclas never received a heretic into the Church, without previously requiring of him a full statement of his former errors.*

Heraclas died in the year 249, and was succeeded

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. vii.

by another disciple of Origen, who had taken his place in the direction of the School of the Catechists—Dionysius of Alexandria, surnamed, by the just admiration of his contemporaries, the Great. He united the twofold greatness of a noble intellect and a pious heart; he was equally distinguished as a bishop and as a theologian. Called to the leadership of the Church in times of peril and suffering, he showed himself an able and courageous pilot. Moderate in discipline, but of tried fidelity to his cause, he combined qualities too often divided, and had the rare merit of representing Christian liberty in a position where it has been deemed necessary to restrain or stifle it.* Born of a rich pagan family, he was early won to the cause of Christianity. He reached it by the path of free investigation,† and as soon as he was converted he became an assiduous disciple of Origen.‡ From him he received the general bent of his thoughts, without adopting all the views of the bold theologian. It is certain that he learnt in the school of Origen that moderation and breadth of spirit, which characterised him in the discussions of the age, and that union of gentleness and firmness which he always displayed. He had himself to encounter the opposition of the bigoted party, which chose to add ignorance to the list of Christian virtues given by St. Paul. Men of narrow and timid souls reproached him with following the

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. VII., passim; St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxix; Lenain de Tillemont, "Mémoires," IV. 242.

† This may be inferred from the remarkable vision he relates. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. vii.)

‡ "Origenis valde insignis auditor." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxix.)

example of Origen, and occupying himself too much with false doctrines. They would have preferred that heresy should be condemned without appeal and without evidence, and they would willingly have included within the vague circle of that term, every notion displeasing to themselves. Dionysius believed in the efficacy of free discussion; instead, therefore, of yielding to so convenient a prejudice, he continued to make a study of the errors he desired to confute, and refused to avail himself of the facile method of condemning that of which he knew nothing. An elder of the Church of Alexandria had reproached him with reading the works of the heretics, under the pretext that they left a stain upon the mind. Musing, no doubt, over this conversation, Dionysius had a vision or a dream, in which he heard a voice saying to him, "Read all that comes in thy way, for thou art able to examine and judge of all: thus wast thou thyself led to Christ." *

In the school of Origen, Dionysius also derived that spirit of large toleration, which he consistently manifested through all the crises of his day. Mixed up in every discussion of dogma or Church government, he uniformly maintained an elevated and conciliatory tone, while he almost invariably espoused the right cause, and defended it with worthy weapons. Dionysius never acts as an official personage, covering his theology with the episcopal mantle, and imposing his own views on others by virtue of his authority as a high dignitary of the Church. He desires no advantage

* Πᾶσιν ἐντύγχανε οἷς ἂν εἰς χεῖρας λάβοις. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. vii.)

over his opponents but that of the goodness of his cause, and uses no weapons but free discussion and moral influence. "I have given my opinion," he says, at the close of his letter to Basilides, "not as doctor, but in all simplicity, as becomes us in free discussion.* Examine it, O my very wise son, and write me, if thou hast found any views more just and better established than mine, or if thou hast come over to my opinion."† Faithful to these principles, Dionysius always preferred conferences for open discussion, to synods of bishops, where sentence is pronounced by a majority made sure beforehand. He witnessed the spread in his own Church and in the adjacent districts, of an error which he regarded as very dangerous, because it materialised the hopes of the Christians, and imparted to them a Judaic colouring; but he never fulminated anathemas against those who held these millenarian notions; instead of this, he called forth a fraternal discussion, in which he himself displayed a truly noble spirit of forbearance and tolerance. This honourable conference lasted during three entire days, from morning to night. "I much admired," says Dionysius, "the firmness, the love of truth, straightforwardness, and intelligence of our brethren. Everything was done with moderation and order; questions were put, replies given, resolutions taken. We endeavoured carefully not to show a bigoted attachment to our preconceived opinions, even though we might believe them to be well founded. In the same manner, we

* Ἐγὼ δὲ οὐχ ὡς διδάσκαλος, ἀλλ' ὡς μετὰ πάσης ἁπλότητος προσῆκον ἡμᾶς ἀλλήλοις διαλέγεσθαι. (Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," III. 232.)

† Ibid.

made no attempt to elude objections. We endeavoured, as far as possible, to deal with the principles involved in the discussion, and to establish them thoroughly; and we were not ashamed to retract what we had said, and to give assent to the opinion of our opponents, whenever we found in their arguments the force of truth. On the contrary, our hearts were open before God, and we accepted frankly and fairly all that was established upon sufficient evidence, and upon the teaching of Holy Scripture." *

It would be impossible to give more explicit recognition to the claims of free inquiry, or more fully to abandon any ground of fictitious authority, supported not by the worth of the arguments, but by the quality or position of the arguer. Acting steadily on these great principles, Dionysius always showed the greatest respect for his adversaries; he frankly accepted the diversity of standpoints, and never laid those who differed from him under the ban of the Church. He would not have used against Marcion the invectives heaped upon him by Tertullian; he would have combated his views with equal decision, but he would have respected his person. Thus he testifies the greatest affection and most sincere admiration for Nepos, the apostle of the millenarians at Alexandria. "I esteem him," he says; "I have a tender love for him;" and he delights to dwell on all the services rendered by him to the Church. Again he adds: "I revere him if on this account alone, that he is dead." But truth has its just claims; it demands to be defended. If Nepos were still living, Dionysius

* Μήτε εἰ λόγος αἱρεῖ μεταπείθεσθαι καὶ συνομολογεῖν αἰδούμενοι. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xxiv.)

would propose a conference with him; but as his writings continue to circulate though he is dead, it is necessary to meet them with a serious refutation.* It is easy to see in what a conciliatory and respectful spirit the Bishop of Alexandria undertakes this task; it goes against his nature to fight with an adversary who can make no rejoinder. He does not hesitate to give the name of brother to Novatus, the schismatic, in the justly severe letter which he writes to him. Dionysius remained faithful to the principles of his whole life in resisting steadfastly the Bishop of Rome, when the latter wished to pronounce a condemnation on all the bishops of the East who refused to recognise the value of the baptism of heretics. His opposition has the more weight, because on the subject itself in dispute, he shared the opinion of Sixtus; but he could not tolerate such an abuse of power, and appealed to the ancient customs of the Church in opposition to the assumptions of the hierarchy.†

Dionysius of Alexandria took an active part in all the great ecclesiastical controversies of the day. In reference to the schism of Novatus, he wrote several letters to the schismatic himself, to Fabius, Bishop of Egypt, and to the Egyptian Christians. His views on Penitence, expressed by himself in a treatise, are equally removed from the extremes of indulgence or of severity. When a discussion arose as to the virtue of the baptism of heretics, he wrote to Stephen and to Sixtus of Rome, and also to several members of the clergy of that Church.† He was the author of a book

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xxiv.

† Ibid., VII. v. ‡ Ibid., VI. xliv.-xlvi.

on the millenarian tenets, which was in fact an epitome of his conference with Nepos on the subject.* Eusebius gives us some important extracts from this work. It is clear that he rejected the authenticity of the Revelation, on internal evidences which we need not now discuss, but which indicate that he possessed much acuteness as a critic, combined with a dangerous facility of being led by his earnestness in opposing error, to take exaggerated views in a contrary direction. In the quarrel stirred up by Sabellius, he showed himself too faithful to the views of Origen, not to cause uneasiness to the cloudy orthodoxy of Dionysius, Bishop of Rome, who accused him of violating the unity of the Divine personality. In order to justify himself, he wrote a treatise, unhappily now lost, which might have shown us how vague and loosely defined was the dogmatic theology of that period.† Besides some letters on the subject of the Easter celebration, Dionysius is also known as the writer of some letters of self-justification, addressed to one Germanus, who accused him of having failed in firmness during the persecution. The fragments which Eusebius has handed down to us of these letters are of great interest, for they show that Dionysius was not wanting either in courage or wisdom, and give us an insight into the stormy and trying times in which he lived. He had, in fact, hardly been raised to the episcopate when the decree of Decius was promulgated through all the cities. The proconsul gave positive commands that Dionysius should be seized, and the soldiers sent in pursuit of him, sought him

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. ix. † Ibid., VII. xxvi.

everywhere except in his own house, where during four days he calmly awaited them.* At the end of that time, having left his home, he was taken, and again rescued from the hands of his captors by some Christians, who, being gathered for a wedding, and hearing of the seizure of their bishop, hastened at once to his deliverance. In vain Dionysius implored his liberators to allow him to go forth to martyrdom, that he might receive the crown for which he longed, but had not dared presumptuously to reach forth his hand;† they constrained him to accept safety. He lived until the death of Decius in the deserts of Libya, from whence he secretly governed his Church. The reign of Gallienus gave a brief respite to the Christians. The persecution having recommenced under Valerian, Dionysius was dragged from his sick bed, and brought before the tribunal of the proconsul Emilianus. The proconsul desired him to merit by apostasy the grace of the emperor. The bishop, as vigorous in soul as he was feeble in body, replied with dignified firmness, and declared that he owned but one God, the Creator and Saviour of all men, who admitted none to share His honours.‡ The proconsul sent him back with the strange reproach of acting ungratefully towards the emperor. The Christian assemblies were forbidden, and the bishop was exiled. But he carried with him the torch of the Gospel, and every new place of banishment was like a new diocese presented to him by his adversaries. He

* Μετὰ τὴν τετάρτην ἡμέραν. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xl.)

† Ἀνέκραγον δεόμενος αὐτῶν καὶ ἱκετευων ἀπιέναι καὶ ἡμᾶς εᾷν (Ibid.)

‡ Ibid., VII. xi.

returned to Alexandria in the year 260, when Gallienus was emperor. He found the city a prey to civil war, which was quickly followed by pestilence. The heart of the pastor was torn by this succession of woes, and he yearned to embrace in his fatherly affection all the Christians of the city.* The Christians, during the epidemic, distinguished themselves by their noble charity, rendering their persecutors good for evil; forgetting the wrongs they had suffered, braving all perils; calm and fearless in the universal terror, paying with their lives the price of their generous tendance of the sick, and teaching the pagan world what Christian vengeance is. Dionysius encouraged and directed this sublime self-devotion, alike by his word and his example. The great labours and sufferings which he underwent broke the strength of the aged bishop; he was unable to repair to Antioch, where a council was convened to discuss the errors circulated by Paul of Samosata, against whom Dionysius had already given his decision in a letter. He died shortly after, having received from the council, in common with the Bishop of Rome, the honour of a special communication of the resolutions taken against the heretics. No higher tribute can be paid to his memory, than to say he was a worthy disciple of Origen, and that in the high position of bishop of one of the principal sees, he displayed all the heroic piety and large tolerance instilled by his master, with more of wisdom, both in theory and practice. He never forgot his obligations to Origen, and in the presence either of friends or foes, was always ready

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xxi

to express his high and grateful admiration of his old master.*

Dionysius had found an invaluable helper in all times of difficulty in a deacon of his Church, named Eusebius, who had been summoned with him before the proconsul. Eusebius distinguished himself by his active and fearless charity during the epidemic which raged at Alexandria, and he rendered signal service to the Christians of the city during the civil war. Withdrawing into one of the quarters which remained faithful to Rome, he obtained, by his own credit and that of his friend Anatolius,—well known among the pagans for his vast philosophical learning,—a capitulation, giving permission to the widows, the children, and the sick, to quit the besieged part of the city. Many Christians availed themselves of this permission to rejoin Eusebius. He received them, and treated them like a father. He sat in the Council of Antioch as the representative of Dionysius, and was subsequently raised to the episcopal see of Laodicea, in which he was soon followed by his friend Anatolius. The writings of these two bishops have been totally lost. Anatolius wrote a treatise upon Easter; he possessed great advantage in the treatment of chronological questions, from his extensive knowledge of mathematics.†

The halcyon-days of the school of Alexandria were now over. Dionysius was the last of its great masters. Two eminent men, of whose writings we have but detached fragments, still shed some lustre over it.

* Μετὰ θάνατον ἐκείνου δι' ἐπαίνων τὸν Ὠριγένην ἄγει. (Photius, "Codex," ccxxxii.)

† Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xxxii.

These were Theognostus and Pierius, who both filled the office of catechist. The former received the highest testimony from Athanasius, who spoke of him as a noble and eloquent man, devoted to the pursuit of knowledge.* Photius, who is severe on his doctrine, praises his eloquence, which he represents as truly Attic, and combining precision and power with habitual elevation.† He appears to have made full use of the legitimate liberty of Christian thought; he preserved the tradition of Origen up to the very eve of the great assemblies which were so soon to enchain the freedom of conviction and belief. Theognostus wrote some "Hypotyposes," after the manner of Clement.

Pierius, a priest or elder of the Church of Alexandria, was his immediate successor. He lived until the commencement of the following century, and by his extensive learning, his eloquence and asceticism, merited the appellation of a second Origen.‡ He exhibited the same contrast between wealth of thought and poverty of outward circumstances,—a poverty which he voluntarily accepted, and even sought, for its own sake.§ He left a Commentary on the Prophet Hosea. Part of his life was passed at Rome. Photius asserts that he died a martyr at Alexandria, where a Church is supposed to have borne his name and that of his

* Ἀνὴρ λόγιος. (Photius, "Codex," cvi.)

† Καλλιλεξίᾳ ὡς ἐν Ἀττικῷ. (Ibid., cclxxx.) See the fragments of Theognostus in Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," III. 417-419.

‡ "Florentissime docuit populum et in tantam sermonis diversorumque tractatuum qui usque hodie extant venit elegantiam, ut Origenes junior vocaretur." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxxvi.)

§ Ὁ μὲν ἄκρως ἀκτήμονι βίῳ καὶ μαθήμασι φιλοσόφοις ἐδεδοκίμαστο. Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xxxii.)

brother Isidore. But the silence of Eusebius and Jerome invalidates this testimony.* Photius is more worthy of belief when he extols the great talents of Pierius, his learning, his gentle and persuasive eloquence.† It is clear that high literary culture was ever much sought after at Alexandria; with it was often associated a fervent piety and a very positive faith on all essential points, but also much indefiniteness of dogmatic teaching. Photius reproaches Pierius with the imperfection of his doctrine of the Trinity. The see of Alexandria was at this time occupied by Theonas. This bishop has left no trace of himself in writing, except a letter addressed to the Christians who held any office in the court of the emperors. This is a valuable document, for the evidence it gives on the early relations established between the adherents of the new religion and the temporal powers. Theonas was succeeded by Peter of Alexandria, who was chosen by the elders on account of his ascetic piety, so much in harmony with the temper of the times. He perished in the persecution, after conducting for three years the affairs of this important Church. ‡

The influence of Origen was as strongly felt in Asia Minor as at Alexandria. We have seen Theophilact, Bishop of Cæsarea, testifying for him the most faithful

* It is certain that Pierius survived Dionysius of Alexandria. If his martyrdom had been coincident with that of Isidore, it would have taken place under the Emperor Decius. It is probable that a martyr of the same name was put to death at this period with Isidore. (See the discussion of this point in Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," III. 436.)

†"Εστι δὲ τὴν φράσιν σαφής τε καὶ λαμπρός. (Photius, "Codex," cxix.)

‡ Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xxxii.

and fearless affection, and esteeming it an honour to make Cæsarea a second Alexandria, by offering an asylum and a chair to the great exile. We have also seen Firmilianus, Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, receiving Origen under his roof during the persecution under Maximinus. He remained always faithful in his friendship to Origen, from whom he had probably received the Gospel. He ever cherished the spirit of liberality learnt in his school, for he joined with Cyprian in resisting the pretensions of the Bishop of Rome on the question of the baptism of heretics.* The majority of the bishops of Palestine and the adjacent countries pursued the same course. We have alluded to the letter of Julius Africanus to Origen on the subject of the book of Susannah. It evinces a fine and practical power of criticism. His "Chronicle," in which he fixes the chronology of the sacred history up to the year 221 after Christ, and his letter to Aristides, in which he endeavours to explain the difference in the two genealogies of the Saviour in Matthew and in Luke, mark him as an exegete of great sagacity, who devotes himself by preference to the conscientious study of the texts, and thus wisely counteracts the excesses of the allegorical school of interpretation.† He was probably Bishop of Emmaus, a town better known under the name of Nicopolis. The only remarkable incident in his life was a mission with which he was charged to Heliogabalus, for obtaining the re-building of his native city. Such a mark of confidence on the part of his fellow citizens proves the

* Cyprian, "Epist.," lxxv.

† See the fragments of his works in Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," II. 224.

esteem in which he was held.* St. Jerome mentions another disciple of Origen, whose country is unknown; this is Trypho, the author of numerous commentaries on the Old Testament.†

A still more illustrious name is that of Gregory Thaumaturgus, whom we have already mentioned in connection with his touching farewell address to Origen, on leaving him to return to his own country.‡ We have seen with what ardent affection he clung to his revered master, how joyously he embraced the Christian faith, and abandoned a career of brilliant promise that he might the better serve his Lord, and devote himself entirely to the diffusion of his new faith. On his return to his own country in 238, he lived for some time in seclusion. A sudden call drew him forth from the desert. Phedimus, Bishop of Amisus, in Pontus, recommended him to the suffrages of the Church of Neo-Cæsarea, a rich and flourishing city, which, through its nearness to the sea, enjoyed a daily growing commerce. Legend, making false use of that which was truly grand in the life of the holy bishop, has encircled him with an imaginary halo. He has been accredited with the wildest miracles,§ transformed, indeed, into a sort of Christian wizard, upheaving with a word enormous blocks of stone. It is pretended that

* "Sub imperatore M. Aurelio Antonino legationem pro instauratione urbis Emmaus suscepit." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxiii.)

† Ibid., lvii.

‡ The principal document in the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus is the discourse dedicated to him by Gregory of Nyss., Vol. III. of his works. (See Lenain de Tillemont, "Mémoires," IV. 315-341.)

§ "Signa et miracula quæ jam episcopus cum multa ecclesiarum gloria perpetravit." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxi.)

the Apostle John appeared to him at the request of Mary, the mother of the Lord, to reveal to him what he was to preach. If we subtract, however, all spurious miracles from his story, we shall still find in Gregory a man of ardent piety, working the true miracles of faith. We see no reason to question the tradition that he overcame a pagan priest by the efficacy of his prayers, and tore him away from his idol worship; but we reject the absurd embellishments with which this simple fact has been overlaid. That he brought a terrible pestilence on the city by his prayers to God against it, that he similarly obtained from God the conversion of the greater part of the inhabitants of Neo-Cæsarea, so that at his death no more than seventeen pagans were left in the city,—all this is but the indirect testimony of the men of his age to the diffusive power of primitive Christianity. He gave a beautiful example of Christian discrimination, when he appointed, as bishop of the town of Commonus, a poor shoemaker named Alexander, despised by the world, but great in the sight of God, who did honour to so exalted a station in the Church. During the persecution under Decius, he retired into the desert. We have regulations and canons addressed by him to a bishop of the country, reproving the unworthy conduct of some pretended Christians, who had during one of the invasions of the barbarians, so common at that epoch, fallen into grave irregularities of conduct, and even committed depredations. We trace in this letter the elevated spirituality of a disciple of Origen; he declares, in effect, to the Christian virgins who had been made the subjects of the vilest outrages, that in

the sight of God they remained pure.* His views on the person of Christ resemble those of Origen, and he did not escape the charge of Sabellianism. He died in the year 270. Melchius, bishop in the same district, is praised by Eusebius for his learning and his great eloquence. One is ready to wonder what could be the advantage of placing a man of brilliant parts in these remote districts.†

We have yet other names of some note to mention in connection with the Eastern Church of this period. Germinus, a priest of the Church of Antioch in the time of Origen, has left in history the trace of some writings which in our day are entirely lost.‡ Malchion, a priest of the same Church, had a public disputation with Sabellius, and was charged to convey to Rome and Alexandria the decisions of the synod of Antioch against this heretic.§ Lucian, also a priest of this city, made himself known by his commentaries, by his revision of the text of the Septuagint, and lastly, by the Apology, already quoted by us, which he delivered in the presence of Dioclesian, at Nicomedia, before his martyrdom.‖ Archelaus, Bishop of Mesopotamia under the Emperor Probus, wrote a book against the Manicheans, which was translated from Syriac into Greek; ¶ and lastly, Phileas, Bishop of Thmuis, in Egypt, wrote an eulogium of martyrdom, and presented a noble defence to his judges, before being sentenced to be beheaded under Dioclesian.**

Towards the close of the second century there was

* Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," II. 257.
† Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xxxii.
‡ St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxiv. § Ibid., lxxi.
‖ Ibid., lxxvii. ¶ Ibid., lxxii. ** Ibid., lxxviii.

every indication of an approaching revolution, which would exalt the hierarchy and magnify external authority in the Church. The moment was at hand when, for the second time, and in a much more significant manner, liberty of Christian thought would be condemned in the person of Origen. The discussion with reference to him, after being for many years silent, was renewed with as much vigour as ever, in the very city where he had confessed his faith amid the horrors of a cruel captivity, and where his ashes reposed. The accusation of heresy was revived against him by Methodius, Bishop of Tyre, who had occupied successively the sees of Olympus and of Patara in Syria. Methodius objected, with justice, in the name of a wise and Christian realism, to the ultra-idealism of Origen; he repudiated the doctrine of pre-existence, and insisted on the resurrection of the body, which, in the system of Origen, was too much refined away. He would not allow, further, that the corporeal element was to be regarded in itself as the enemy or the gaoler of the soul. But he unwittingly and involuntarily acknowledged the influence of his great adversary, by the boldness with which he gave utterance to the doctrine of free-will.* However much ground there might be for some of his attacks, he seems to have made them with too much asperity, and he thus promoted an unjust reaction of feeling against Origen, which applied to him a rule of faith more rigid than that of his own day, and through him aimed a blow at the spirit of true liberality in the Church, no less than at religious philosophy.

* A considerable fragment of Methodius' writings is found in Photius, "Codex," ccxxxiv.; St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxxiii.

Methodius wrote a commentary on the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, a book on the resurrection, another on the creation, and a reply to Porphyry. He died a martyr's death in the persecution under Dioclesian.

Origen found an eloquent defender in Pamphylus, Bishop of Cæsarea, a man equally remarkable for his severe piety, his voluntary poverty, his contempt for worldly honours, and his zeal for Christian knowledge.* He copied with his own hand the greater part of the manuscripts of the great Alexandrine, for the library of the Church over which he had shed so pure a lustre. St. Jerome tells us that he saw the copy of the commentaries on the twelve minor prophets, and that he regarded it with lively emotion, for it seemed to him watered with the blood of the martyrs.† Pamphylus, when thrown into prison, consoled himself by writing an apology for Origen, which was to be completed by Eusebius. The first book of this apology has been preserved to us in the Latin translation of Rufinus, but not quite in its original form and spirit, if we are to give credit to the vehement protestations of St. Jerome.‡ This fragment proves that Origen was already placed under the ban of the Church, that his name alone was a bugbear to the narrow and bigoted party,§ and that among his enemies some dwelt exclusively on the

* *Ἀνὴρ παρὰ ὅλον τὸν βίον πάσῃ διαπρέψας ἀρετῇ.* (Eusebius, "De Martyr. Palest.," xi.)

† "Mihi videtur sui sanguinis signasse vestigiis." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxxv.)

‡ It is to be found in the fourth volume of the works of Origen, Delarue Edit., and in Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," IV. 339.

§ "Ubi Origenis cognita fuerint esse quæ placebant, statim displicent statim hæretica esse dicuntur." (Ibid., 346.)

erroneous passages in his works, while others condemned him unread.* Among his friends, many were too prudent to avow their true sentiments, and unworthily abandoned his cause.† Pamphylus, who was ready, as he proved, to shed his blood for Jesus Christ,‡ was not a man to yield to the opinion of any, even of Christians, if it seemed to him unjust, and his last days were devoted to the defence of the great saint, who, in spite of numerous faults, had admirably harmonised the claims of science and piety. But this defence could not obtain a hearing in a time rife for the definitive triumph of the hierarchical party. Origen must inevitably be found wanting when weighed in the balances of great councils. With Pamphylus, the era of free Christian theology in the Eastern Church ends.

* "Consequens erat neque facile condemnare et alienum ab ecclesiastica doctrina temere pronunciare." ("Reliq. Sacræ," IV. 341.)

† "Nihil sibi cum ipsius doctrina commune esse confirmant." (Ibid., 347.)

‡ Eusebius, "De Martyr. Palest.," xi.

CHAPTER III.

THE FATHERS OF THE WESTERN CHURCH, FROM COMMODUS TO CONSTANTINE.

§ I. *The Fathers and Bishops of the North-West.*

The Western Church presents an ever growing contrast to the Church of the East. It never enters into the speculations of religious philosophy. We find in it more schisms than heresies. Instead of disputing about the speculative foundations of Christianity, ecclesiastical government forms the subject of debate, or questions of discipline are agitated, as by the Novatians and the Montanists. Thus Italy and Africa present us with types widely differing from those we have been contemplating in the East. The first great figure which passes before us belongs, however, to the family of the Alexandrine doctors. St. Hippolytus, who was bishop in Italy, took part in all the doctrinal disputations of the day, and entered into the internal deliberations of the Church of Rome, with a spirit at once liberal and ardent. He might be called the Origen of the West, without the calmness and serenity, without also the brilliant genius of the Alexandrine Father.* Born in the latter half of the second century,

* In reference to Hippolytus, see the "Philosophoumena," Miller's Edition; "Hippolyti Refutatio omnium Hæresium;" Re-

probably in Italy, the speculative bent of his mind made him seek the East as his intellectual fatherland. There he abode a long time, so at least we are led to conclude from his intimate acquaintance with oriental heresies. Such journeyings were very common among the Christians of his time. It is certain that he was the immediate disciple of Irenæus.* He passed some years at Lyons with the Apostle of Gaul. Chosen to the office of elder at Rome, he was called to take the oversight of a neighbouring church in the port of Rome or Ostia, if we may credit Prudentius.† Here also his statue was found. He was the first celebrated preacher

censuerunt Latine verterunt, notas adjicerunt." (Lud. Duneker et F. G. Schneidewin, Göttingen, 1859.) Abbé Cruice has recently published an edition of this, with notes and commentaries (Paris, 1860). The "Works of St. Hippolytus" have been edited by Fabricius. On the same subject, consult Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xx.; St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxi.; Lenain de Tillemont, "Mémoires," III. 236; Bunsen, "Hippolytus."

* Photius calls him the disciple of Irenæus: Μαθητὴς Εἰρηναίου ("Codex," cxxi.)

† Le Moyne has asserted that Hippolytus was Bishop of Portus Romanus, in Arabia, the modern city of Aden. He grounds his statement on the fact that Eusebius placed the name of Hippolytus side by side with that of Beryl of Bostra, who was, as we know, an Arabian bishop. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI., xx.) This supposition will not bear investigation, especially since the discovery of the "Philosophoumena." It is certain that Hippolytus was bishop in the neighbourhood of Rome. We read, in fact, in the "Philosophoumena," p. 3, Ἀρχιερατείας τε καὶ διδασκαλίας μετέχοντες. To reconcile this post of bishop with that of elder, which the author of the "Philosophoumena" seems to have held, Bunsen asserts that from the second century the bishops of the towns adjacent to Rome had seats in the Council of the Central Church, like the cardinals of our day, several of whom are bishops. ("Hippolytus," I. 153.) Hippolytus was designated Bishop of Ostia by Peter of Alexandria in his "Chronicon Paschale;" by Cyril, Nicephorus, Zonaras, and Anastasius. His paschal cycle accords with the usages of the Church of Rome.

of the West. One of his homilies, having for its subject the glory of Christ, was delivered in the presence of Origen.* He doubtless entered into familiar relations with the great Eastern doctor, to whom he would be drawn by all the affinities of heart and mind. He was, in truth, like Origen, engaged in the study of the most important questions of religious philosophy and doctrine, and shared his keen abhorrence of the growing usurpations of the hierarchical party. The writings of Hippolytus exhibit this twofold tendency. He is known to have written commentaries on the greater part of the books of the Old and New Testaments, a treatise on Antichrist, whom he supposes about to be revealed; treatises on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit; on God and the Resurrection of the Body; on Good, and the Origin of Evil; on the Work of the Six Days; a Paschal Cycle, and a "Chronicle," after the manner of that of Julius Africanus. Homilies of his for feast-days were also handed down in the Church. His book on Substance was a polemical writing directed against Platonism. He is also known to have addressed a letter to Severina, one of the great Roman ladies belonging to the imperial court. He was pre-eminently distinguished as a polemic. He directed a special argumentative treatise to the Jews; but he reserved all his strength for the conflict with the heretics. We may mention among the writings belonging to this category, his book on the Incarnation, opposing the heretic Vero; his homily against Nöetus, his Little Labyrinth, directed against Artemon; and finally, his great work upon "All the

* "Προσομιλίαν de laude Domini Salvatoris, in qua præsente Origene, se loqui in Ecclesia significat." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxi.)

Heresies," a brief epitome of which he himself edited. This is a vast repertory, reviewing all the doctrinal controversies in the Church, from the earliest ages and most obscure commencements of Gnosticism. Christian antiquity has left us no more valuable monument than the "Philosophoumena" of Hippolytus, discovered a few years since among the dusty treasures of a convent on Mount Athos.* Without entering here upon any analysis of the system of Hippolytus, we may indicate its main characteristics. It is distinguished by a sort of fusion of the Eastern and Western elements. The Bishop of Ostia is indeed the contemporary of Origen, but he is also the disciple of Irenæus. He tempers the idealism of the one with the moderate realism of the other; and in his interpretations of prophecy, he is far too close a follower of the Bishop of Lyons. He has not the fertile originality of Origen. He is an indefatigable compiler, who in the great cause at issue between Christianity and heresy, seeks rather to bring forward many documents and conclusive testimonies, than to establish his point by close argument. The scholar is more evident than the divine or the philosopher. He pleads before the tribunal of history rather than before that of conscience. He delights to trace the genealogy of the ideas which he is opposing, and when he has once proved the pagan origin of a heresy, he considers he has gained a decisive victory. This great importance attached to history, evidently excessive in an argumentative point of view, and weakening the force of the discussion of ideas on their own merits, gives an immense value of another kind to his works,

* See note C, at the close of the Volume.

since it makes them a treasury of documents directly bearing on Christian antiquity. If Hippolytus may be justly reproached with an undue love of tradition, he nevertheless relies solely on the power of persuasion, and formally rejects the support of purely external authority in the conflict with heresy. "We use the weapons, not of force," he says, "but of the demonstration of the truth."* In fact, therefore, he had fully adopted the great apologetic method of Alexandria; he believed in the profound harmony between the human soul and God; he was, as he himself tells us, a merciful disciple of the Word, who is the friend of man.†

We do not know on what ground Hippolytus received the name of the Bishop of the Nations; but he had well merited it, if it embodied the recognition of his noble and sympathetic concern for pagan humanity. In doctrine, Hippolytus is altogether a disciple of the school of Origen and Dionysius of Alexandria. He displays the same indefiniteness of formula combined with the same firmness in the faith. His book against heresies shows him equally opposed to hierarchical pretensions and doctrinal errors. Both were leagued against him in the violent controversy which he sustained with the Bishop Callisthus, of whose blameworthy life and intrigues he speaks with implacable severity, and with a degree of passion which scarcely allows him to be an equitable judge. But it is a noble passion which moves him; he is eager to maintain at once the holiness and liberty of the Church,

* Οὐ βία διαρρηξαι τες, ἀλλά μονῳ ἐδέγχῳ ἀληθείας δυνάμει διαλύσαντες. ("Philos.," 310.)

† Ibid., 339.

and he is justly indignant with those who purchase accession to power by connivance at sin, and who were willing to sacrifice, for the sake of the new rights coveted by the priestly hierarchy, the severe rules of ancient discipline. We shall presently trace these internal conflicts of the Church of Rome, which had the effect of placing the power of the keys in the hands of the bishops, in a sense widely different from that of the Gospel. In order to understand them, we must know all that had gone before and led to them. Let it suffice us now to say, that Hippolytus showed in these melancholy controversies an indomitable energy, not free from some admixture of roughness. He protested vehemently against the unworthy proceedings of an ambitious and immoral bishop, who, after making sure his election by canvassing for the suffrages of the heretics, sought to establish his power by showing a culpable leniency to evil. Hippolytus denounced him to the universal Church, stamping on his brow an ineffaceable brand. His testimony, long stifled, is heard in our own day with as much force as in the time of Callisthus, reminding the Church that her liberty is lost only in the measure in which her holiness is compromised.*

The Church of Rome would not have had leisure to give itself to internal discussions, if it had not been in the enjoyment of tranquillity, for which it was in-

* Prudentius in his Hymn xi., *Περὶ στεφανῶν*, preserved the memory of these painful discussions. He represented Hippolytus as a repentant Novatian. Hippolytus, who died between the years 230 and 240, could not have belonged to a sect which only made its appearance in 245 ; but Prudentius in this statement only echoes a tradition based upon truth, which preserved the recollection of his opposition to the party dominant at Rome.

debted to the precarious favour of Heliogabalus, and the enlightened protection of Alexander Severus. With Maximinus, persecution recommenced. The same year in which Alexander Severus died, Hippolytus was sent into Sardinia with the Bishop Pontianus.* If we are to believe Prudentius, he was promptly recalled, but only to become a martyr.† His bones were carried to Rome, and placed, in the time of Constantine, beside the revered remains of St. Laurentius. The chapel reared to his honour always attracted, Prudentius tells us, a large concourse of people. It was probably at this period that the statue was erected to him, which is now to be seen in the Vatican, and which brings before our eyes the noble and austere form of a martyr bishop. The head is life-like, the brow broad, the expression full of firmness and fervour, and of that mystical illumination so striking in the rude sketches of the catacombs. We love to picture to ourselves, under such a form, the heroic champion of the Church's freedom, who combined, with a blameless deportment and fervent faith, depth of learning and breadth of thought.

Shortly before Hippolytus, there lived at Rome a

* We read in an ancient manuscript of the "Liber Pontificalis," Pontianus, ann. V., m. II.; d. vii., fuit temporibus Alexandri. Eo tempore Pontianus episcopus et Ypolytus presbyter sunt deportati in Sardinia, Severo et Quirilino coss. (235)." Evidently by "temporibus Alexandri" we must understand the last year of his reign, which was also the first of Maximinus the Thracian.

† Prudentius, in the Hymn already quoted, represents the martyrdom of Hippolytus under fanciful colours. He makes him undergo the fate of the son of Theseus. Clearly the analogy of the names has led to a confusion between Christian legend and Greek mythology. (Bunsen, "Hippolytus," I. 158-161.)

Christian theologian so closely resembling Hippolytus in spirit and doctrine, that the two have more than once been confounded. This was Caius, who was raised to the office of elder.* The most important event of his life was a conference with Proclus, one of the heads of the Montanist sect. He entered into the discussion with much energy,† and made a memorial of it, in a writing which, according to Photius and St. Jerome, gained much repute.‡ Caius was led by his earnest repudiation of the views of the millenarians, to call in question the genuineness of the Revelation, which he ascribed to Cerinthus, who, he averred, had been artful enough to make it pass under the revered name of St. John. It was Caius, also, who first suggested the doubt whether the Epistle to the Hebrews was really written by St. Paul.§ It follows from these few scattered hints, gathered from the history of the time, that Caius held remarkably liberal views in relation to ecclesiastical tradition, and was inclined strongly towards oriental idealism. Christian antiquity is still more meagre in details of the most distinguished apologist of the Church of Italy. Minucius Felix is known to us only by his famous dialogue. He had been an advocate before embracing Christianity, and we recognise in him a man practised in discussion. According to St. Jerome, he had gained much dis-

* *Ἀνὴρ ἐκκλησιαστικός.* (Eusebius, "H E.," II. xxv.)

† "Disputationem adversum Proculum Montani sectatorem valde insignem habuit." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lix.)

‡ Photius, "Codex," xlviii.

§ "Epistolas Pauli tredecim tantum enumerat quartam quæ fertur ad Hebræos dicit non ejus esse." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lix.)

tinction at the bar, previous to coming forward as the defender of Christianity, before a greater assemblage than any Roman forum, since his voice was to be heard throughout the whole world.* He does not treat his subject in so exalted a manner as Clement and Origen, but his book is admirably adapted to the ordinary calibre of mind. His "Octavius" is a conversation full of naturalness, of clearness, and of character, between two men of cultivation rather than of learning, who are not clothed in the philosopher's mantle, and do not discourse according to the rules of the schools. The charm of the dialogue consists mainly in the absence of all philosophical pretensions. There is no trace of a formal discussion; it is simply the free interchange of thought between friends. Such was the treatment which religious questions might fairly expect in polite society, among men who knew and appreciated each other. The "Stromata" and the book "Contra Celsum," display, it is true, wealth of an altogether different kind, but this current apology has its value. The style of Minucius Felix is of a good school for his age; it is simple and graphic. In its transparent fulness it exhibits a mind acute rather than profound, but luminous, exact, and strongly penetrated with the great truths of the Gospel.

The Church of the North-west has only one name to contribute to the writers of this period—that of Victor, bishop in Pannonia, who, unskilled in the Latin tongue, wrote in a barbarous style, and with but moderate erudition, commentaries on several books of the Old Testament, and on the Revelation, as also a volume

* "Romæ insignis causidicus." ("St. Jerome, De Viris Illustr.," lv.)

on heresies. He delights in all the puerilities of the symbolism of numbers. He died a martyr.*

The intellectual activity of the Church of Rome was not proportioned to its importance. It may be said that the growth of the Church was owing to the absence of theological controversies. No question of religious philosophy came to distract its bishops from the care of its good government, and from the extension of their own authority. It is only just, however, to admit that its leaders were generally men of true metal, often narrow-minded, but always valiant at heart, ready to serve the Church either by life or death. The greater number of the bishops of Rome shed their blood for Christ, and thus earned to themselves the highest honour. Their martyrdom was to pave the way for their successors to ecclesiastical royalty, and the Church of Rome thus advanced daily nearer to the end towards which it was impelled, alike by its own genius and by the circumstances of the age.† The list of Roman bishops commences under Commodus with the two least honourable names. We have already mentioned Zephyrinus, in speaking of Origen's visit to Rome. He was an ignorant old man, of feeble mind, incapable of discriminating between truth and heresy, possessed with the greed of gain, and the docile instrument of the intrigues of Callisthus, formerly a slave.‡ He did nothing without

* "Victorinus Petavionensis Episcopus non æque Latine ut Græce noverat. Unde opera ejus gradia sensibus viliore videntur compositione verborum." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxxiv.)

† The principal authority, after Eusebius and Jerome, is the "Liber Pontificalis" of Anastatius. See also Lenain de Tillemont, "Mémoires," III. IV.; Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ."

‡ Ζεφυρίνου ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου καὶ αἰσχροκερδοῦς. ("Philos.," 279.)

the counsel of this cunning and crafty man, and fancied he was governing the Church, when in truth he was but the servile tool of another.* Callisthus had been the slave of a pious and venerated man named Carpophorus, who belonged to the emperor's household. He early showed a restless, ambitious, and unscrupulous spirit. His master, relying on his honesty, and willing to turn his talents to account, confided to him a sum of money which he himself held in trust, to be used in some banking transactions. Callisthus' transactions were of a very simple kind: they consisted merely in the embezzlement of the funds with which he had been entrusted—funds which ought to have been doubly sacred to him, since they were the sole resources of widows and fatherless children, placed in his hands on the faith of his piety.† He appropriated the whole sum, says Hippolytus, and then found himself in difficulties. Some have tried to represent him as the unfortunate victim of a commercial speculation; but if this had been the case, Callisthus would have been more open with Carpophorus, who was not a hard master, as is proved by the readiness with which he, in the end, released the defaulter. The bankrupt slave, burdened with an evil conscience, instead of giving any explanation of his conduct, took to flight. He hurried to the sea-coast, and embarked in a vessel ready to start. His master, following on his track, came on board the same ship. No sooner did Callisthus see him than he threw himself into the sea, preferring death to the shame of

* "Philos.," 278-288. The following account is taken from the "Philosophoumena."

† Ὁ δὲ ἐξαφανίσας τὰ παντὰ ἠπόρει. (Ibid., 286.)

being retaken. He was with great difficulty rescued, and the evidence thus given of his guilty fear was unmistakable. Carpophorus laid upon him only the lenient punishment of making him grind in the mill. Callisthus soon contrived an ingenious method for recovering his liberty. He worked on the compassion of a number of Christians, and persuaded them that if he were released, he would be able to replace a part of the funds entrusted to him. Carpophorus yielded the more willingly to their intercessions, because he was himself most anxious to recover the moneys placed in the hands of his slave, and for which constant applications were made to him. The hope proved a mere chimera. Callisthus knew better than anyone that the money received by him had been all squandered. Finding himself set at liberty, but kept under strict surveillance, he was in a fresh difficulty, from which he was at a loss how to escape.* The money was not forthcoming, the creditors were clamorous, the master would be relentless. Callisthus felt himself a ruined man, but he endeavoured to give an honourable colouring to his misfortune. He devised a tragi-comic scene, which shows his consummate craftiness. He said to himself that if he could grasp the martyr's palm, that would shield him from dishonour. What did he do, therefore? Under pretext of reclaiming some money from the Jews, whose mercantile vocation was already very marked, he repaired to their synagogue; but as they owed him nothing, he had no claim to present. Instead of speaking of a debt which was purely imaginary, he began to use violent language, and entered into a hot

* Ὁ δὲ μηδὲν ἔχων ἀποδιδόναι, τεχνην θανάτου ἐπενόησε. ("Philos.," 287.)

and bitter controversy with them. He loudly pronounced the well-known watch-word: "I am a Christian!" But this heroic saying fell discordantly from the lips of a false slave. When brought before the tribunal of the town prefect, he was quickly confounded by his master, who declared that this bold Christian, this aspirant after martyrdom, was nothing better than an unfaithful steward. The Jews, imagining that Carpophorus sought to save his servant by a subterfuge, reiterated their accusations, and Callisthus was sentenced to work in the mines in Sardinia. Even there he gave proof of his inexhaustible cunning. Marcia, the mistress of Commodus, some time subsequently, asked Bishop Victor for a list of the Christian exiles in Sardinia, and obtained their pardon from the emperor. Naturally the name of Callisthus did not appear on this list, for a condemnation for theft could not be confounded with the martyr's doom. Callisthus, however, so worked by tears and entreaties upon Hyacinth, a eunuch of the court of Commodus, who was charged with the mission of delivering the captives, that he got his name added to those inscribed on the roll of amnesty.* Bishop Victor was bitterly annoyed to see him come back, but, being a merciful man, he left him in quiet, and to avoid the shame and scandal to which his appearance gave rise, sent him to live in the country on the bounty of the Church. There the favour of Bishop Zephyrinus sought him out, and he at once entered upon public life. It is evident that he was utterly unfit for the important functions now assigned to

* Ὁ δὲ γονυπετῶν καὶ δακρύων ἱκέτευε καὶ αὐτὸς τυχεῖν ἀπολύσεως. ("Philos.," 288.)

him. In the first place he was a man of no cultivation. He had not had time in his stormy life to make himself familiar with the great questions under consideration in the Church. He had not the true intuition of Christian feeling. He carried into the management of the affairs of the Church, the same bold and artful, subtle and intriguing spirit which he had manifested in the service of his old master; he went about to betray the Divine Head of the Church as he had betrayed Carpophorus, and to deal falsely, not this time with a trust of money, but with the trust of doctrine and discipline. He was to be, not the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep, but the mercenary who sells the flock for gain. Under *Z*ephyrinus, whom he led at will, he had but one idea, but one aim—to ensure his own election to the episcopacy.* Hippolytus describes him in these indignant words: "He was a veritable magician, a cunning and perfidious seducer, who managed to bewitch with his sorceries many of the brethren."† Having attained his ends, and entered into alliance with some oriental heretics, he endeavoured to extend widely the claims of the episcopate. We shall see how he succeeded when we come to describe the ecclesiastical revolutions of this period. Callisthus, according to the "Roman Martyrology," died a martyr in the year 222. The question naturally arises, how a bishop of Rome could have been put to death at this date, under the reign of Alexander Severus. The fact is not absolutely impossible, for persecution never completely ceased, but the date named lends colour to a doubt of the truth of the story.

* *Θηρώμενος τοῦ τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς θρόνο.* ("Philos.," 284.)
† *Ἦν οὖν γοής.* (Ibid., 289.)

We shall confine ourselves to the mere mention of the immediate successors of Callisthus—Urban and Pontianus. The latter was sent as an exile into Sardinia, with Hippolytus, under Maximinus, and there died. Antherus, who succeeded Pontianus, only just assumed the episcopal dignity, and was followed almost immediately by Fabian. According to the account of Eusebius, no one would have thought of nominating Fabian, if a dove, alighting on his head, had not seemed, as the organ of the Holy Ghost, to designate him to the office.* After his martyrdom, two great bishops presided in succession over the see of Rome. These were Cornelius and Stephen. The former, who rose gradually to the episcopate by all the ascending steps of the hierarchy, maintained a vigorous conflict with the Novatians; he had them condemned in a great synod, and denounced them in his letters addressed to the various Churches. He died an exile and a martyr, honoured by the lamentations and by the tribute of Cyprian.† The latter, after acting in harmony with the Bishop of Carthage, came to a difference with him on the question of the baptism of heretics. Stephen was on the point of taking measures which would have violently agitated the Church, when he was thrown into prison. His cell became a sanctuary, for there he courageously celebrated divine service. He was succeeded after his death by Sixtus, who had been his deacon, and to whose charge he had committed the treasures of the Church. Sixtus trod in his footsteps both in the false assumption of authority and in heroic fidelity. He was put to death

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VII. xxix. † Cyprian, "Epist.," lii.-lvii.

in the Cemetery of Callisthus, in which he had taken refuge.* Dionysius, who succeeded him, is known only by his polemics against Dionysius of Alexandria, with reference to Sabellianism.† The other Bishops of Rome during this period have left no mark in history. They all laboured, however, with equal patience and skill, for the establishment and extension of their power. It is not necessary to suppose them actuated by vulgar ambition; they merely obeyed the instincts of their race, and followed the current of their age.

§ II. *Tertullian.*

We have alluded, when speaking of the history of missions at this period, to the peculiar character of the people who inhabited ancient Carthage at the commencement of our era. Rude in nature, under the semblance of a polished civilisation; greedy of sensual gratifications, superstitious to an excess, infatuated with the arts of magic, and uniting to these barbarous tendencies a keen relish for inflated and pretentious rhetoric, such as is ever popular in an age of social decline, this people seemed destined to be one of the last strongholds of paganism. Christianity, nevertheless, effected a wide entrance among them; nowhere had it so rapidly won so many adherents, but neither had it anywhere else found so much difficulty in completely assimilating its rapid conquests. The African nationality set its strong stamp upon the Church

* "Liber Pontif.," xxiv. † Cyprian, "Epist.," lxxxii.

planted on this burning soil, where it seemed that all nature must assume a quick and almost passionate development. This very nationality, however, gave to Christianity its most eloquent defender, in whom the intense vehemence, the untempered ardour of the race, appear purified indeed, but not subdued. No influence in the early ages could equal that of Tertullian; and his writings breathe a spirit of such undying power that they can never grow old, and even now render living, controversies which have been silent for fifteen centuries. We must seek the man in his own pages, still aglow with his enthusiasm and quivering with his passion, for the details of his personal history are very few. The man is, as it were, absorbed in the writer, and we can well understand it, for his writings embody his whole soul. Never did a man more fully infuse his entire moral life into his books, and act through his words.*

Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, born in Carthage in the year 160, was the son of a centurion of the proconsul of that city.† He belonged therefore to that middle rank of life which compelled him to labour, but which left him the choice of a vocation. Gifted with a brilliant imagination, an intellect at once powerful and pliant,‡ he was a born orator. He was

* Beside the works of Tertullian, see St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," cliv.; Vincent de Lérins, "Commonitorium," I. xxiv.; Lenain de Tillemont, "Mémoires," III. 196; Neander, "Antignosticus. Geist des Tertullianus" (Berlin, 1849); Bœhringer, "Die Kirche Christi," I. 270. Consult especially Tertullian's writings.

† "Patre centurione proconsulari." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," liii.)

‡ "Hic acris et vehementis ingenii." (Ibid.)

thus led to embrace the profession of a pleader.* He retained through life a power of close, consecutive, forcible argument, pushing his reasonings to their farthest logical consequences, and sometimes even beyond. The golden days of the forum were over. The magistracy had become degraded, like all other institutions, under an oppressive government. The spirit of liberty, sometimes tumultuous, but healthful even in its violence, no longer animated the speech of the orators. All was sacrificed to effective form; the rhetoricians were the rulers of the day. Carthage did not compensate, as Alexandria did, defects of form by the wealth of philosophic thought. All that it demanded of its orators was a profusion of images, and perpetual variety in the colouring of their harangues. It cared only for adornment, and was charmed, like a savage or a child, with mere kaleidoscopic effect. The nearest approach to barbarism is the refinement of a people, to whom the noble interests of freedom and of thought are but matters of scorn. Tertullian had not, therefore, like the great Alexandrian doctors, the privilege of listening to earnest philosophic teaching. He had no other masters than those rhetorical jugglers, who, like Apolinus, took the place of the rope-dancers in the same arena on which they used to give their performances. No one felt the transition an abrupt one, for there was not the vestige of an idea or a sentiment expressed in the florid and pretentious discourses de-

* Τοὺς Ρωμαίων νόμους ἠκριβωκὼς ἀνηρ. (Eusebius, "H. E.," II. ii.) We must not confound the ecclesiastical writer of whom mention is made in the "Pandectes," with Tertullian. Their style is totally diverse. (Neander, "Antignosticus," 8.)

livered in the public place of concourse. Tertullian would have perhaps become the most dazzling of these literary necromancers, if he had not embraced a faith which converted speech into the sword of the warrior, and made the orator a witness and often a martyr. It is certain that during this early period of his life, he amassed a great store of knowledge not connected with the science of law. His writings show very extensive, if rather discursive erudition. It is evident that he read much, but rapidly; with classical literature he was not very familiar, and rarely borrowed from it. With his turn of mind, he could have little relish for the noble simplicity of Homer or Sophocles. Nor does he appear to have deeply studied the great philosophers of Greece. He confounds all their systems under one common anathema; he takes them in a mass, and makes no distinction between their various schools. He was able, however, to read them in their own language; he knew Greek well enough to write it easily, from which we may infer that in his youth he had acquired all the culture open to the student of his day in Carthage.*

He wrote, before his conversion, a treatise on the difficulties of marriage. "When he was still young," says Jerome, "he played upon this subject." The expression is fair and *naïf*, showing how Tertullian exhibited at this period the frivolity habitual to the African rhetorician, to whom the gravest questions were but matters of jest.†

* He tells us that he had written works in Greek: "De isto jam nobis in Græco digestum est." ("De Baptismo," xv.)

† "Quum adhuc erat adolescens lusit in hac materia." (Hieron., "Adv. Iovin.," I. xiii.)

Bad taste in literature was not the worst feature of the paganism of the Decline. At Carthage, in particular, corruption of manners had reached the last extreme. The climate, the ancient traditions of an oriental religion, the subversion of old faiths, the degradation of slavery—all tended to aggravate it, and Carthage was the Corinth of Africa, a Corinth even more utterly corrupt than the Grecian, because lacking even that superficial polish of elegance and grace which the Hellenic race never entirely lost. The young pleader, who acknowledged no moral restraint, and owned no laws but those of euphonious speech, yielded to all the seductive influences of his time. He himself tells us that he had plunged deep into debauch, and signalised himself by his excesses.* He had, doubtless, in memory this sad phase of his own life when he depicted adultery in such flaming characters, and represented it as the foulest form of crime, associated in the prohibitions of the law of God with idolatry and homicide, which are, in fact, almost always its necessary companions.† With unshrinking boldness, Tertullian lifted up his voice against this accursed fraternity. He thus speaks in the name

* "Ego me scio neque alia carne adulteria commississe neque nunc alia carne ad continentiam eniti." ("De Resurrectione Carnis," 51.) The word adultery must be taken in a very wide acceptation. Tertullian, in his treatise on Modesty, applies it to every guilty liaison, as is evident from the following passage: "Ubicunque vel in quamcunque semetipsum adulterat et stuprat, qui aliter quam nuptiis utitur." ("De Pudicitia," iv.) "Peccator mei similis (imo me minor), ego enim præstantiam in delictis meam agnosco." ("De Pœnit.," iv.)

† "Inter duos apices facinorum eminentissimos sine dubio digna consedit." (Ibid., v.)

of idolatry, of which he knew so well the fatally corrupting influence upon the moral character: "I—idolatry—have furnished adultery with most abundant occasions. My groves, my high places, my sacred streams, and my very temples in your cities know this well!"* Tertullian might have added: "My infamous places of amusement know it also." Experience had taught him that the circus and the theatre were the school of all evils, and he is unquestionably recalling the memories of his own early days, when he describes the fatal influence exerted by them over the souls of the spectators. He knew experimentally that they were as the very sanctuaries of infamy,† and that the most attractive representations were those most strongly suggestive of adultery and sin. He had himself breathed that tainted atmosphere, and would fain warn his brothers against the same pollution.

In the midst of this dissolute life, the young pagan carried concealed under the smooth exterior of a worldling of the age, a secret uneasiness, an incurable wound. What but his own conscience could have been speaking to him before his conversion, with that Divine voice which renders to truth a testimony so much the more precious that it is spontaneous, and which he afterwards so justly called the witness of the naturally Christian soul? He had then felt so strongly, as distinctly to remember them, the fear of death and of judgment, the dread of the powers of darkness, the need of a Divine

* "Sciant luci mei et montes et vivæ aquæ ipsaque in urbibus templa." ("De Pœnit.," v.)

† "Privatum consistorium impudicitiæ." ("De Spectac.," xvii.)

protection, the imperious yearning for another existence after this earthly life,—all those experiences, in truth, which are the voices of the spirit calling for Christ, and which he was to analyse with so much discrimination in the sublime pages of his works.* We have no detailed account of his conversion to Christianity. We may infer, however, from a sort of abruptness characterising his religious creed, that he was not led to embrace it by slow and long research. He seems to have been snatched as it were at once from the life of paganism to a life in Christ. He did not rise, like Clement and Justin, by the study of ancient philosophy, to the lowest step of the temple, to that earnest attitude of mind which can never be a substitute for revelation, but which is at least a preparation for its reception. The change in Tertullian must have been almost instantaneous.

We should be much inclined to think that the spectacle of the martyrs going courageously and joyfully to meet death, produced upon him the deep impression he has himself described, and that the first influence operating upon his heart, was the holy contagion of a heroic devotedness. Be this as it may, he entered upon his new career with all the impetuosity of his nature, and from the day when he put his hand to the plough, in the field watered with so much blood, he never cast one glance backward. He thought of the things which were behind only as things accursed, and pressed forward with all his powers towards the mark he had set before him. He trampled under foot, without remorse, everything which came between him

* "Testimonium Animæ," vi.

and his aspirations, whether the interposing obstacle was, as at one time, paganism with its pomps and glories, or, as at another, the ecclesiastical forms of his day, when these seemed to him to fail of their true purpose. He was ever ready to avow that the impossible alone was worth aiming at. He shared, therefore, the lot of all such ardent and aspiring spirits; he never knew repose; his hand was ever against every man. His life was one long struggle, first with himself, then with every influence opposed to his own views, or differing only from his by greater moderation. To him moderation in anything was impossible; he went to extremes both in hatred and love, both in language and thought; but every act and word was the result of deep conviction, and was animated by that which alone can give vitality to the efforts of any human spirit—a sincere and earnest passion for truth. Even the excess of his vehemence gave him an element of power, for it commanded the service of a fiery eloquence. His whole character is summed up in the one word, passion—passion made to subserve the holiest of causes, pure from all petty ambition, but constantly betraying itself into harshness and injustice towards others. "Miserable man that I am," he exclaims, "ever consumed with the fire of impatience!"* This ejaculation truly expresses the man, in all the excessive strength of his feelings, and no less in the admirable humility which made him ask in so touching a manner for the prayers of his readers.†

* Miserrimus ego, semper æger caloribus impatientiæ." (De Patientia," i.)

† " Tantum or cumuto petitis, etiam Tertulliani peccatoris memineritis." (" De Baptismo," xx.)

The passion by which he is constantly impelled gives us the true key to his character as a writer; it enables us to understand both his defects and his excellencies. It would be vain to look for a just balance of thought in such a man; he must inevitably attach himself exclusively now to one side, now to another; one day he will be a champion of Church authority, another, he will push independence to its utmost bounds. We shall not expect to find in him the breadth of spirit, which is always accompanied with a degree of indulgence, because it is capable of comprehending even those to whom it is opposed, and of discerning the points of possible conciliation. Such a man as Tertullian will always and everywhere see only salient contrasts, and will invariably give prominence to the points of difference between his own views and the systems or opinions with which he is in conflict. He will be less a metaphysician than a dialectician. Dialectics will be, in his hands, a formidable weapon of offence, a terrible instrument with which he will both make and widen wounds. If he chooses to restrict himself within a limited field, he will dig and delve into its most hidden depths. "The truth," he says, "lies not on the surface of things, but in their substance, and is most often the opposite of that which superficially appears."* Thus concentrated, his zeal burns but the more fiercely; he not only grasps an idea, he strains it with all his force, and often demands from it more than it is able to give. The style is the man, it has been said; and these words are emphatically true of Tertullian.

* "Veritas non in superficie est, sed in medullis." ("De Resurrectione Carnis," iii.)

His style is in fact the exact expression of his soul; it is strong even to hardness; it is strained, incorrect, African, but irresistible. It is poured forth like lava from an inward furnace, kept ever at white heat, and the track of light it leaves is a track of fire too. It abounds in bold and splendid images, but there is nothing gentle or joyous in its brilliancy; it is not the calm brightness of the sun; it is the strange, lurid fire which wreathes round the summit of the volcano, and rises in red smoke. The language of Tertullian is full of sharp and abrupt antitheses, like those which characterise his thoughts. Two hostile worlds appear in constant collision alike in his words and in his ideas; it is war to the death—a fierce and tumultuous struggle between the pagan or heretical idea and the Christian. In every phrase one might seem to hear the sharp clash of swords that meet and cross, and the spark which dazzles us is struck from the ringing steel. Hence that incomparable eloquence, which, in spite of sophisms and exaggerated metaphors, ravishes and rules us still.

We have already given numerous examples of Tertullian's style, and we shall have frequent occasion to multiply such instances in the course of this history, for it is impossible to cite any lines of his which do not clearly show the impress, the fervid force of his genius.

We have but few details of the life of Tertullian after his conversion. We know only that he was raised to the dignity of priest in the Church of Carthage.* St. Jerome speaks of him under this title, and he

* "Tertullianus presbyter." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," liii.) He clearly does not reckon himself among the laity. ("De Anima," ix.)

himself appears to assume it in many of his writings. He was married; and we possess two letters written by him to his wife. If he seems occasionally to recognise the beauty of the institution of marriage, he nevertheless carries the ascetic tendency so far as to do injustice to the high mission of Christian parents. He cannot understand the desire for children, not only on account of the peril of their souls, but also in the consideration of the pains they will cost, and the bitterness sure to mingle with the happiness they bring, as if these very pains and agonies, borne by a love of deep devotion, were not the highest hallowing of the parent and child-life.* This monastic trait is thoroughly in harmony with the general views entertained by Tertullian of human life. With his loins girt about and his lamp burning, he awaits, with irrepressible impatience, the solemn moment which shall close the present and inaugurate the glorious future. "The end of time," he says, "is at hand for us." He believes himself ever standing on the verge of the last judgment; he earnestly yearns for it, and anticipates its decisions. He exhibits, therefore, the most profound contempt for all that men of the age covet, for all that might sink deeper in the sand the tabernacle so soon to be taken down. Such a disposition needed but to be developed to make him an ardent Montanist. His adherence to that heresy is the great event of his life, an event which divides his moral history into two parts, and the preparation and results of which we shall have now to trace in his numerous writings, without, however, entering on a

* "Liberorum amarissima voluptate." ("Ad Uxor.," v.)

detailed exposition of his theological system, which would here be out of place.

His first writing is a letter to the martyrs, or rather to the Christians, who were in prison awaiting their final doom. In this letter he exhibits that ardent yearning for the life to come, and that contempt for the present age, which never forsook him. To him, the poisonous dungeon into which the captives were cast seemed less of a prison than the great world with its hollow show and subtle snares. One passage of this letter lets us read the very heart of the author; it is that in which he congratulates the martyrs on escaping the saddening and sickening spectacle of the infamies of pagan society. "You have not the false gods before your eyes," he said; "you have not to pass before their statues; you need not participate by your presence in pagan feasts; you are spared the pain of inhaling the breath of impure incense; your ears are not offended with the clamorous sounds issuing from the theatres, nor your souls vexed by the cruelty, the madness, the vileness of those who perform their parts there; your eyes are not polluted by the scenes witnessed in haunts of vice and prostitution."*

These strong expressions mark the grief and indignation which filled the soul of Tertullian, as he witnessed at every step taken along the streets of Carthage, fresh proofs of the accursed influence of paganism. We trace the same emotions in his treatise on the Spectacles, which is of the same date. It was probably composed

* "Non vides alienos deos, non nidoribus spurcis verberaris, non clamoribus spectaculorum, atrocitate vel furore, vel impudicitia celebrantium cæderis." ("Ad Martyr.," ii.)

on the occasion of the solemn games celebrated in honour of the triumph of Septimus Severus over his rivals. These great representations, provided by a victorious emperor to gratify public curiosity, were very brilliant, and highly attractive to the masses. The Christians brought out of paganism found it hard to go against a torrent which carried the whole population of Carthage in a body to the circus. The very recollection of such scenes in the past was fraught with temptation. Tertullian, like a vigilant sentinel, uttered his cry of alarm in his treatise on the Spectacles. He naturally regards them with extreme severity. We shall here cite his peroration, which exhibits all the great qualities of his eloquence. Replying to the objection that it must be lawful to have some enjoyment in life, he exclaims, addressing himself to the Christian: "Art thou, then, so ungrateful as not to acknowledge the many and great joys with which thy God has enriched thee, and not to be grateful for them? What can be sweeter than the pardon of God, our Father and our Lord, or than the revelation of truth? . . . Is there a greater luxury for the soul than to despise luxury, to despise the present age, to possess true liberty, a clear conscience, a life which satisfies, and which is no longer troubled with the fear of death, and to trample under foot the false gods of the nations? . . . These are the delights of Christians; these the spectacles, holy, eternal, free, on which their eyes may feast."* Then, drawing a striking contrast between

* "Quid enim jucundius, quam Dei patris et Domini reconciliatio, quæ major voluptas quam fastidium ipsius voluptatis, quam seculi totius contemptus, quam vita sufficiens, quod calcas deos nationum?" ("De Spectac.," xxix.)

these sublime enjoyments and the amusements of the circus, Tertullian describes the Christian himself as the athlete, who, rising up at the signal from God and at the sound of the angelic trumpet, goes forth to win the palm of martyrdom.* "Wilt thou have wrestlings, combats? They are at thy command, as great and as many as thou wilt. Behold sensuality subdued by chastity, perfidy vanquished by good faith, cruelty giving place to mercy, and pride cast into the shade by humility. Such are the victories which win the crown for us. Wilt thou have blood? Hast thou not the blood of Christ?"†

Yet more exalted joys await the Christian in the future. Tertullian lavishes his brilliant and powerful colours on the canvas in the representation of the great day of final judgment. He carries his readers into the midst of that august assembly; he himself takes part in its transactions; he gives his deposition as a witness before the bar of the Almighty; he triumphs over his adversaries, and the cry of satisfied vengeance blends with his hymn of praise and adoration. The day of wrath, which is to abase the present age in the dust while it exalts the glory of Christ, is the day for which Tertullian impatiently waits. From these powerful pages of his, the inspiration of the *Dies Iræ* was doubtless first derived.

"Oh, what a spectacle," he exclaims, "will be that gloriously triumphant return of Christ, so surely promised and so near! What will be the exultation of

* "Ad signum Dei suscitare, ad tubam angeli erigere, ad martyrii palmas gloriare." ("De Spectac.," xxix.)

† "Vis et pugillatus et luctatus? præsto sunt, non parva sed multa. Vis autem et sanguinis aliquid? Habes Christi." (Ibid.)

the angels! what the glory of the risen saints! Their reign will begin, and a new Jerusalem arise. Then will come the closing scene—the dawning of the great day of judgment, to the confusion of the nations who scoffed at it and looked not for it; that day which with one devouring flame will destroy the old world with all its works.* Oh, glorious spectacle! How I shall admire, how I shall laugh, how will my joy be magnified † in seeing so many kings whom the apotheosis of men had exalted to heaven, cast down into the lowest deeps with Jupiter and his witnesses; in beholding the judges, who have persecuted the name of Christ, devoured by a more terrific fire than that into which they cast the Christians. What a spectacle will be that of the philosophers confounded in presence of their disciples, who will be consumed with them, because they believed on their word that God cared not for us, and that the soul was nothing, or, at most, was reserved for a course of transmigration! What shall we say of those lying poets who shall be dragged, not before Rhadamantos or Minos, but who shall stand white with terror before the tribunal of the Christ in whom they believed not?‡ But most of all my gaze will be riveted upon the murderers of Christ. 'Behold,' I will say to them, 'the carpenter's son, born of a woman of low estate, the Sabbath-breaker, the Samaritan, the demoniac!§ Behold Him! This is He! this is He

* "Ille ultimus judicii dies, ille nationibus insperatus, ille derisus." ("De Spectac.," xxx.)

† "Quid videam, ubi gaudeam, ubi exsultem." (Ibid.)

‡ "Ad inopinati Christi tribunal palpitantes." (Ibid.)

§ "Hic est ille, dicam, fabri aut quæstuariæ filius, Sabbati destructor, Samarites et demonium habens." (Ibid.)

whom you bought of Judas for thirty pieces of silver, whom you smote with the reed and spat upon, whose face you marred, and to whom you gave vinegar to drink.' . . . And in order that I may see such things, and feast my eyes on such spectacles, what need shall I have of your liberality, prætors or consuls, quæstors or priests of the false gods? Faith grants us to enjoy them even now, by lively anticipation; but what shall the reality be of those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive? They may well compensate, surely, the circus and both amphitheatres and all the spectacles the world can offer."

This joy in the anticipation of the doom of the enemies of Christ is altogether alien to the spirit of the Gospel; that mocking laugh, ringing across the abyss which opens to swallow up the persecutors; this cruel irony over the most fearful woes,—all these fiery characters on the page, are evidences of Tertullian's passionate attachment to the cause of Christianity, and also of his intense hatred of everything opposed to it. The last judgment is, in his view, the carrying out of a just and terrible retaliation. A tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye, torture for torture, eternal punishment for the persecutors of the Church—such was his expectation and his hope. Feelings like these cannot be quiescent. Tertullian anticipates the bitter vengeance to be taken in the last day upon his enemies, by mocking and trampling on them in the time present. Hence the implacable, cutting, sardonic tone of his apologetic writings. He does not, like Justin or Clement of Alexandria, seek to trace in paganism a

dim preparation for Christianity. He takes the axe of John the Baptist, and lays it at the root of the tree, with the full intention to cut it down and consume it utterly. He is strongly aggressive, and scorns all oratorical rules. We shall see presently how he demonstrated the truth of Christianity. We confine ourselves now to noting his modes of argument, so far as these serve to bring before us the marked individuality of the man. He aims, not to persuade, but to strike down and to confound. His great Apology, of which we have the first rough outline in his treatise addressed to the Nations, and which he corrected and completed on the occasion of the persecution under Septimus Severus, is rather a proud challenge to the pagan world than the pleading of a cause. We have analysed what may be called its judicial portion, that which deals with legal discussions before pagan tribunals. We have noted its sarcastic and angry tone. Tertullian is never satisfied with defending himself; he always makes a raid on the ground of his adversary, boldly attacking his beliefs and mercilessly ridiculing them. He has an inexhaustible fund of mockery for the great Olympic gods in whose names the Christians are sacrificed. He shows the pagan hell peopled with parricides, with the incestuous, seducers, murderers, thieves; "in fine," he adds, "by men who bear the likeness of some one of your gods."* He delights to exhibit the shame of these gods; he despoils the idol of its ornaments, and shows how it was first carved for money by some rude workman, and then sold in the market. He openly scoffs at the im-

* "Quicumque similes sunt alicujus dei vestri." ("Apologia," xi.)

potence of these pretended protectors of cities, who suffer them to be pillaged and burnt, unheeded and unaided. He asks where Jupiter was hidden when his island of Crete was conquered, and what Juno was doing when Carthage was made to bow under a foreign yoke? He draws a very humorous picture of the priests of Cybele mutilating themselves frightfully in order to obtain the recovery of Marcus Aurelius, when that emperor had already been dead for several days. "O tardy despatches!" he exclaims, "which did not make Cybele sooner informed of this event. In truth, the Christians may well laugh in their turn at such a god.*" The heroes of pagan story are ridiculed no less than the Olympian gods. Tertullian asks what title Æneas can establish to his exalted rank, except that of having crept away like a deserter from the battle? He is as severe upon philosophy as upon idolatry. After a detailed enumeration of the vices of the most illustrious sages of antiquity, he exclaims ironically, "O ancient wisdom! O Roman gravity!" † He bitterly satirises the prudence of those freethinkers, who, by performing certain genuflexions before the idols, purchased the right to laugh at them in private. After describing the infamies of pagan life, he speaks thus boldly of those who, while drawing down the anger of God upon the earth by their crimes, impute to the Christians the scourges by which the land is desolated: "It is you who cumber the world, and are the cause of all the public calamities and woes." If such an

* "O nuntios tardos." ("Apologia," xxv.)

† "O sapientiæ Atticæ! O Romanæ gravitatis exemplum!" (Ibid., xxxix.)

apology was wanting in the gentleness which persuades, it displayed in the highest degree the force which subjugates, and sometimes attracts, even noble natures by its manly vigour. Those whom it did not irritate, it convinced, and more than one soul of stoic temper relished the acrimony of its tone.

A short time after his Apology, Tertullian wrote one of his best treatises, that which he himself entitled, "The Testimony of the naturally Christian Soul." He endeavoured to show that the religion of Jesus Christ responds to the truest aspirations of our moral being, to those, that is, which find the most purely spontaneous expression. It would be far from the truth to suppose that Tertullian, in this treatise, took at all the same ground as the Alexandrine apologists, or attempted any sort of reconciliation between revelation and philosophy. On the contrary, it gives evidence of his unvarying hostility to all the ancient culture. He protests against pagan science in the name of nature, and appeals from the doctrines of the wise men to the human soul, as he describes it in its rude and uncultured state. He opposes the testimony of the public square to that of the school. He thus adheres faithfully to his own views, even in the employment of an apologetic method, which, fairly followed, should have led him to a juster judgment of the philosophy of Greece, since this too was a revelation of one of those immortal needs of the human soul, to which he made his appeal. We only make passing mention of this treatise, in which we shall presently trace the essential idea of his Apology.

Of the strictly theological writings of this period,

we mention only the treatise, "De Præscriptione," a dangerous weapon, which Tertullian left in the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities, even after he had deserted their party. He shows himself, in this writing, as intolerant of heresy as he had elsewhere shown himself of philosophy. He even denies the right of the heretics to free discussion of their opinions, and closes their mouths at once, by a decision allowing of no appeal. This treatise, which is of importance for the influence it exerted on the formation of a positive tradition, is a new proof of the vehemence of Tertullian's character, which never suffered him to think with moderation. The conclusion of what may be called the exposition of principles, deserves to be quoted. The heretics, he holds, must be without excuse unless Christ has given the most flagrant contradiction to Himself; and to make apparent the absurdity and irreverence of such a supposition, he puts into the mouth of the Divine Master such words of retractation as could alone justify heresy. He makes Him thus speak: "I promised the resurrection, even the resurrection of the body; but I have found that I shall not be able to accomplish it. I declared myself born of a virgin; but that has since seemed to me a reproach.* I called Him my Father who sends the sun and the rain; but I have found a better father, who has adopted me. I forbade you to lend an ear to heresy; but I was wrong."† Such was the use to which Tertullian turned his powers of irony.

* "Natum me ostenderam ex virgine, sed postea turpe visum est." ("De Præscript.," xliv.) † "Sed erravi." (Ibid.)

If he occupied himself but little with theology during the earlier period of his Christian life, he nevertheless wrote several treatises on Christian morality, marked by his accustomed earnestness and exaggeration of style, and revealing to us his inner feelings. The treatise on Penitence, while it contains more than one grave error, and arbitrarily imposes limitations on the Divine mercy, refusing pardon to those who fall repeatedly, shows us Tertullian's deep horror of evil, which he tracks under its several subtle disguises and into those most secret hiding-places, where it exists as yet only as an unlawful thought and desire. These pages seem to be themselves wet with the tears of true repentance. "Penitence is our life, for it is the great antidote of death. O sinner, such a one as I am, or rather less guilty than I, who am myself the chief of sinners, embrace repentance, cling to it as the shipwrecked man clings to the plank which saves him. It will raise thee above those floods of sin which engulf thee, and will bring thee into the port of Divine mercy. Seize the opportunity of an unhoped-for blessedness."* Tertullian initiates us into his own inward struggles in the following passage: "Our deadly foe slumbers not in his hatred. Never does he display it more actively than when a man is about to escape him altogether. His malice is fanned to a flame by that which had seemed to quench it. He cannot but grieve and groan to see so many sins pardoned, so many works of death destroyed, so many grounds of accusation annulled. He quivers with rage to think

* Ita invade, ita amplexare, ut naufragus alicujus tabulæ fidem." ("De Pœnit.," iv.)

that this sinner, now become a servant of Christ, will judge him and his angels. Therefore he watches, attacks, harasses him, striving to defile his soul by some fleshly concupiscence, to enslave it by the fetters of the age, to overthrow his faith by the fear of some earthly power, or to lead him astray into the paths of heresy. He besets him all around with snares and pitfalls." *

We have already indicated what would be the stongest temptation to a man of the temper of Tertullian—the indulgence of passion, constant irritation, and anger. His writing on Patience denotes a sincere desire to guard against a vehemence which he was never able wholly to subdue. "I am like the sick," he says, "who, just because they are deprived of health, are always dwelling on its blessings. God grant that the shame of not practising that which I commend to others, may lead me to its realisation."† After thus humbling himself, Tertullian utters the most splendid eulogium on Patience, and concludes by thus tracing the portrait of this grace in highly poetical lines: "Her face," he says, "is tranquil and serene; her forehead pure, and unfurrowed by one line of sadness or anger;‡ her eyebrows are slightly raised in token of joy; she droops her eyes, not in sorrow but in humility; a dignified silence seals her lips, the hue of her countenance is that of innocence and security. She defies the devil, and he trembles at her smile.

* "Observat oppugnat, obsidet." ("De Pœnit.," vii.)

† "Vice languentium, qui cum vacenit a sanitate, de bonis ejus tacere non nôrunt." ("De Patientia.," i.)

‡ "Vultus illi tranquillus et placidus, frons pura, nulla mæroris aut iræ rugositate contracta." (Ibid., xv.)

White is the robe which falls across her breast and enwraps her form; it neither heaves nor throbs tumultuously. She is seated on the throne of a mind full of quietness and peace, which is ruffled by no storm, shadowed by no cloud, which is like the calm and open heaven of blue, which Elias saw in his third vision." *

Strange paradox! Tertullian, even while thus extolling the beauty of Patience, indulges in reflections of an entirely opposite tendency: he regards Patience as a sort of refined vengeance visiting the enemies of the Church. "Every offence, whether in words or deeds, will break against Patience like an arrow darted at a wall of solid rock. It blunts itself to no purpose, and often rebounding from the resisting medium, returns upon the aggressor himself and wounds him. He who offends thee does it with intent to grieve; the result of his offence he designs to be thy distress of mind. If thou art not troubled by him he has lost his pains, and is himself thereby distressed. Thou art therefore not only thyself sheltered from harm, which might be in itself sufficient, but thou hast the further joy of seeing thine adversary prostrated in his attempt, and his vexation is thy revenge. Such is the virtue and the reward of Patience." † This singular passage fully supports Tertullian in his self-condemnation; it shows that he was even

* "Qui non turbine glomeratur, non nubilo livet, sed est teneræ serenitatis, apertus et simplex." ("De Patientia," xv.)

† "Tunc tu non modo illæsus abis, sed insuper adversarii tui et frustratione oblectatus et dolore defensus. Hæc est patientiæ, utilitas, et voluptas." (Ibid., viii.)

more deeply penetrated, than he was himself aware, with a spirit opposed to Christian gentleness and patience.

Any man knowing, as he did, what true repentance meant, and waging earnest and steady warfare with himself, could not but be conscious of a constant need for prayer. His treatise on Prayer, which, like that of several other Fathers, is a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer, contains, beside valuable details as to the practices of the Church in the second century, some noble sayings and true cries of the soul after God. "How daring is it," he exclaims, "to pass one day without praying! Prayer is the bulwark of faith; it is our shield and our arrow to be used against our ever-watchful foe. Let us then never go forth unarmed; let us, clothed in the armour of prayer, defend the standard of our Captain, and await in prayer the trump of the angel." *

There are four other writings of Tertullian belonging to this period: his treatise on Prayer; his two letters to his wife, already mentioned; his treatise on Idolatry, characterised by the excessive severity which led him to condemn not only all contact with paganism, but also with society outside the Church; and finally, his treatise on Baptism, in which we find a singular combination of spirituality and sacramental materialism; for while he urges the postponement of the baptism of children, he holds that some magical virtue is present in the baptismal water. We need not be astonished at these paradoxes; strong contradictions

* "Quam autem temerarium est diem sine oratione transigere." ("De Oratione," x.)

and abrupt antitheses form a part of the very nature of the man.*

We approach now the decisive crisis in his life. It was but the culmination of moral influences, long at work—his excessive rigour, his pursuit of the ideal, his chimerical and ardent spirit, his keen consciousness of the imperfections of the Church. The Montanist sect could not fail to be attractive in its exalted piety to such a mind as Tertullian's. The stern severity of its discipline, the union of a realism coloured with the warmest hues of the oriental imagination, with an unbending spirit of independence,—these peculiar characteristics of Montanism answered so exactly to the aspirations of Tertullian, that he inevitably became one of its apostles. Had Montanism not been already in existence, he would have been its founder. It is certain that a journey taken by him to Rome, led him to make a decision, of the importance of which he could not be unaware, since it placed him beyond the limits of the Church, and launched him on a perilous sea of opposition. St. Jerome attributes his change of opinion to discussions in which he is supposed to have engaged with the clergy of the Church of Rome. He accuses Tertullian of yielding to a feeling of envy, while he nevertheless fully admits that he had received provocation from his opponents.† From these rather

* "Oratio murus est fidei, arma et tela nostra. Sub armis orationis signum nostris imperatoris custodiamus, tubam angeli expectemus orantes." ("De Oratione," xxiv.)

† "Hic cum usque ad mediam ætatem presbyter Ecclesiæ permansisset invidia nostra et contumeliis, clericorum Romanæ Ecclesiæ ad Montani dogma delapsus." (Hieron., "De Viris Illustr.," liii.)

vague expressions, we conclude that the priest of the Church of Carthage entered into a controversy with the heads of the Church of Rome, and that the discussion was carried on on both sides with too much vehemence and passion.

In order rightly to understand the subject-matter of the dispute, we need only realise to ourselves the circumstances in which the Church of Rome was at this time placed. Now, the recent discovery of the "History of Heresies," ascribed to St. Hippolytus, and which belongs undoubtedly to this period, enables us to form a very exact idea of the situation of the Roman Church at the moment. This writing,—a remarkable one in many respects,—informs us that it was just at this period, under the pontificate of Zephyrinus, that the party led by Callisthus, and seeking to assure the triumph of the hierarchy, entered into alliance with a little group of heretics lately arrived from the East, whom it treated with the utmost consideration, in order to ensure their support against the representatives of the ancient austere discipline of the Church. The reason of this coalition is easily to be understood. These heretics, among whom were Sabellius, Cleomenes, and Noëtus, were agreed in denying the distinction of the Divine persons in the doctrine of the Trinity. They had found their most zealous opponents among the Montanists, who were strongly attached to Trinitarian views. On the other hand, the Montanists were, by their ascetic severity and their determined assertion of the universal priesthood —which went so far as to do away with a special priesthood altogether—the sworn foes of the hierar-

chical faction. Thus the party of Callisthus and the party of the Oriental heretics, found themselves drawn and bound together by a common hatred of Montanism.

Such were the conditions under which Tertullian arrived in Rome, and at once entered into a hot discussion with the clergy of that important Church. What subject more likely to be the theme of such a discussion than the questions raised by the critical conjuncture which, on the authority of St. Hippolytus, we have just described? This supposition is confirmed in the most positive manner by the testimony of Tertullian himself. In fact, he tells us that he went into Italy, fully prepared for the conflict, and well informed of the position of the various parties. A short time before starting on his journey, he had met in Carthage a heretic, named Praxeas, who had come from Rome. He professed the same views as Sabellius and Noëtus, and had openly opposed Montanism; he had even obtained from Bishop Victor, the successor of Zephyrinus, the condemnation of that sect, which had been at first treated with consideration.* Tertullian argued with him, discussed his opinions, refuted them, and led him to retract. It was soon after this triumph that he repaired to Rome,† already well disposed towards the Montanists, having learned, in his contest with Praxeas, to regard them as the champions of orthodoxy. At Rome he found in full activity all

* "Episcopum Romanum coegit litteras pacis revocare." ("Adv. Prax.," i.)

† Lenain de Tillemont places the journey of Tertullian under Zephyrinus. ("Mémoires," III. 237)

the errors with which he had successfully contended at Carthage; indeed, here they were sustained by the patronage of some of the high dignitaries of the Church. He substantiates the report of a coalition entered into between the hierarchical and heretical parties, for the suppression of Montanist views. It was natural, therefore, that he should regard the Montanists as the allies from whom he must seek support. His discussions with the Roman clergy intensified his feelings of irritation, and he threw himself, with all the vehemence of his nature, into the party whose views of dogma and Church government were most strongly opposed to the hated tendencies of the hierarchy, and which was already engaged in earnest conflict with a coalition which seemed to Tertullian odious and impious. He was first made a Montanist by his strong repugnance to those who repudiated Montanism. He was not a man to rest content, like Origen and St. Hippolytus, with a simple protest against them; to his protest he added the emphasis of an open separation of himself from the Church, and, with all his genius and all his eloquence, he passed over into the camp of schism.*

* We hope that this explanation of Tertullian's sudden change will not strike the reader as forced. It is based upon a very simple process of deduction. It is certain that he was in Rome at the commencement of the third century, under Zephyrinus. It is equally certain that the heretical and anti-Montanist tendency of Praxeas, against which he so earnestly laboured, acquired for a time a great ascendency over the clergy of Rome, through the intrigues of Callisthus, and that this was just at the period of Tertullian's visit to that city. It seems to us very obvious to see in these circumstances the cause of the violent controversy between Tertullian and the clergy of Rome mentioned by St. Jerome, and of Tertullian's change of opinions.

Tertullian's change of opinion is not manifested in a very marked manner in his writings. He continues to occupy himself with the same questions, and treats them in the same style, and, save for a slight increase of exaggeration, and some rare allusions to the favourite ideas of Montanism, he exhibits, as a writer, the same excellencies and defects as before. He was, in truth, in spirit a Montanist, before he became one avowedly and formally. There was no sudden change in him, but only the development of a tendency previously existing. His sentiments remain the same: they are only raised, as it were, into a higher key; they break through all restraint, and reveal themselves in their full force. Schismatic as he is, Tertullian still continues to combat heresy with even redoubled vehemence. His challenges to paganism are increasingly bold and menacing, and his austerity as a moralist reaches the point of hardness.

In this second period of his career we have only one apologetic writing from his pen—the letter to the Proconsul Scapula, which is assigned to the year 211. A haughty and defiant tone rings through these lofty pages, which conclude with a bold denunciation of the judgments of God against the persecutors. That which we most admire in the letter, is the explicit recognition of the rights of conscience. This man, who can scarcely brook any discussion with a heretic, repudiates coercion in matters of religion with as much distinctness as we in our day, and with that eloquence which is his speciality. It is a singular blending of dogmatic intolerance with moral toleration, which can nevertheless be explained by his hatred of everything resem-

bling philosophic culture, and his confidence in the instincts of the human soul, however rude and ignorant. He does not desire liberty of thought, because that would involve the recognition of the claims of science, which he distrusts; but he does desire liberty of conscience, because the instinct of the divine appears to him so much the more sure, the more it is left to work directly in the hearts of the people. This is the solution of a contradiction which at first excites surprise.

If Tertullian, as a Montanist, concerned himself comparatively little with pleading the cause of Christianity before the bar of pagan society, he took peculiar pains to make broad and deep the gulf between that society and the Church. His treatise on the Crown of the Soldier supports his treatise on Idolatry, in absolutely interdicting military service for the Christian. In short, that which he desires is not only to separate himself from the world in all the usages of life, but to stir up the world's hatred, so as at length to fall under its blows. No rupture less than this can suffice him; and he preaches martyrdom as the highest realisation of the Christian's calling. Not satisfied with combating, in his treatise against the Scorpion-Gnostics, the heretics who call in question the lawfulness of a martyr's death, and cover their cowardice with foolish sophisms, he denies the right of escaping from death, even when it can be done without compromise; and he writes pages of burning indignation against those who flee in the time of persecution, failing to perceive that however subtle his interpretation, he is placing himself in direct contradiction with the precept and example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This same principle of extravagant austerity animates all his moral treatises of this period. In his two books on the Adornment of Women, he rigidly condemns all luxury, and exacts from Christian women the most severe simplicity. The opening page of this treatise is one of the most beautiful in his writings. He desires that the woman should be as a penitent and weeping Eve, wearing the veil of mourning, and putting far away from her all vain adornment.* "O woman!" he adds, "it has been told thee that thou shouldst bear children in sorrow and anguish, and that thou shouldst be subject to thine husband. Dost thou not know that thou art ever the same Eve? The sentence of God weighs ever on thy sex; thou art then still under His chastening stroke. Thou didst give place to the devil among us; thou didst break through the barrier which guarded the forbidden tree; thou wast the first to desert the divine law; and because of the death thou hast deserved, the Son of God must needs die. And wouldst thou have other adornment than robes of skins? Dost thou think that if, at the beginning of the world, the fleeces of Miletus had been already shorn, and vestments had been woven of the trees of India; if Tyre had brought forth her purple, and Phrygia her broidered veils, and Babylon her tissues; if the pearl had gleamed and the ruby glowed; if avarice had delved into the earth for gold; if the mirror had been even then permitted to tell its flattering falsehoods,— dost thou think that Eve, driven out of Paradise as one already dead,† would have de-

* "Evam lugentem et pœnitentem." ("De Cultu Feminarum," 1.)

† "Jam mortua, opinor." (Ibid.)

sired such adornments? All these ponderous treasures heaped on a woman already condemned and dead, are but funereal pomp."*

The treatise on the Duty of Virgins to be Veiled, urges the same considerations in a more subtle form. The ascetic tendency becomes more and more marked; it is especially manifest in Tertullian's two writings on Chastity and Monogamy. In the former, he degrades marriage almost to the level of adultery, and in the latter, faithful to the principles of Montanism, he absolutely prohibits second marriages. The treatise on Modesty gives, in a form of greatly augmented rigour, the same directions which he had laid down in his treatise on Penitence. According to this writing, no pardon or return is possible for those who, after baptism, have fallen into so grave a sin as adultery. This Tertullian regards as apostasy for self-gratification, a crime of far deeper dye than apostasy from fear of torture. "What!" he passionately exclaims, "will you re-admit defiled rather than bleeding bodies?† Which is the more deserving of pity in his penitence—the man whose flesh has been polluted, or he whose flesh has been torn by tortures? The one denies Christ in spite of himself, the other yields to debauch of his own free will. Passion obeys nothing but its own seducing voice, and none can pretend they are under constraint when self-gratification is concerned.‡ On

* "Ideo omnia ista damnatæ et mortuæ mulieris impedimenta sunt, quasi ad pompam funeris constituta." ("De Cultu Feminarum," I.)

† "Contaminata potius corpora revocabis, quam cruenta." ("De Pudicitia," xxii.)

‡ "Nulla ad libidinem vis est, nisi ipsa, nescit quodlibet cogi." (Ibid.)

the contrary, what varieties of anguish and torture are brought to bear to compel apostasy before the tribunals! Who has the more foully denied Christ — he who deserts Him in the hour of uttermost agony, or he who forsakes Him at the call of lust? he who suffers bitterly in turning away from Him, or he who gives Him up in mere lightness?"* In his treatise on Fasting, Tertullian defends the rigorous practices of Montanism, and maintains, in opposition to the Church of his time, the compulsory character of fasting under the new covenant—a fresh proof of the influence he still continued to exert even as a heretic, for the Church ultimately came round to his view. We have yet to notice one singular writing of his—"De Pallio." He had been ridiculed for exchanging the toga for the pallium of the old Greek philosophers; he justifies himself by showing that the philosopher's mantle is the symbol of austerity. He who has the right to wear it may say to the brilliant but corrupt society by which he is surrounded: "I desire nothing of thee. I owe nothing either to the forum, or to the field of Mars, or to the senate; I occupy no office; I frequent no audience of prætors. . . . I am no soldier, judge, or governor; I have withdrawn from the people."† Such was, in truth, Christian life, according to Tertullian's conception of it; a life altogether separated from pagan society, which it condemns by the mere strangeness and sadness of its aspect. That which made him take

* "Quis magis negavit, qui Christum vexatus an qui delectatus amisit." ("De Pudicitia," xxii.)

† "Non judico, non milito, non regno, secessi de populo." ("De Pallio," v.)

pleasure in the pallium was its singularity and sombre colour: it was a silent censure on all the infamy and vice, which the rich Roman toga covered with its folds.

Although he had adopted the garb of the Greek philosophers, he was not on that account any the more tolerant of their views. His polemics indicate, on the contrary, a growing violence and asperity with regard to them. He encountered among his adversaries a painter named Hermogenes, whom he ridiculed unsparingly as an artist, before refuting him as a heretic. He made merciless use of his vein of satire at the expense of this unfortunate individual. Hermogenes believed in a material element, eternal, confused, chaotic, tumultuous. "In this element," says Tertullian, "he represented himself." To see how far passion could lead him, we have only to read the first chapter of his treatise against Marcion. He commences by painting in repulsive colours Pontus, the fatherland of the heretic, "a country inhabited by bold and bloody barbarians, where the sky is iron, the light always dim, the sky always cloudy, the wind always boisterous, winter eternal, the earth inert and cold, bringing forth nothing but monsters."* "Of all these monsters, Marcion is the greatest.† The worst thing that can be said, even of this barbarous country, is that it should have produced such a man—a man more savage than the Scythian, more inhuman than the

* "Dies nunquam patens, unus aer, nebula, totus annus hybernum, omne quod flaveret aquilo est, omnia torpent, omnia rigent." ("Adv. Marc.," i.)

† "Nihil tam barbarum ac triste apud Pontum quam quod ille Marcion." (Ibid.)

Massagete, fiercer than the whirlwind, more gloomy than the thunder-cloud, colder than winter, more rugged than Caucasus. This is the true Prometheus, belching forth blasphemy against Almighty God. He is more destructive than the beasts of those wild countries. What devouring creature of Pontus can be compared to him who preys upon our Gospels?* Diogenes' dog sought for a man with a lantern in the full sunshine. Marcion, after extinguishing the torch of faith, lost the God whom he had found." We have vainly endeavoured to convey the vituperative force of this passage, which shows to what a height of hateful passion Tertullian allowed himself to be carried when speaking of his adversaries. That he should have done so, is the more surprising, because he had no need to avail himself of such methods to cover feebleness of argument; on the contrary, his dialectic skill is great: he is fertile in resources, cutting, telling, ironical; passing from subtle argumentation to exposition full of breadth and power, and rising often to the highest eloquence. He understood perfectly the art of giving point to an argument by a sudden and direct turn. Thus, after describing the paradoxical god of Marcion's doctrine, who, while he is holy, yet will not uphold by punishment the law of holiness, he exclaims: "Listen, O ye sinners, and you who, being not sinners as yet, may become so in the future: a more complaisant God has been discovered; a God who is not to be offended or angered; who avenges not his law; who kindles no flames of Gehenna; who suffers no gnashing of teeth

* "Quis tam comesor mus Ponticus, quam qui evangelia corrosit?" ("Adv. Marc.," i.)

in outer darkness—this is the good God of Marcion. He does indeed forbid evil, but only as a form."* Again, when seeking to establish the reality of the incarnation, and of the sufferings of the Redeemer, Tertullian shows, with an eloquence equal to his logic, that all Christianity totters to its fall if the humanity of Christ is a semblance only. "Paul," he says, "was then mistaken when he declared that he would know nothing but Christ crucified; he was wrong when speaking of His burial and His resurrection; our faith too is false, and all our hope in Christ an idle vision.† O miserable heretic, who dost excuse the murderers of God! Jesus Christ, in fact, suffered nothing from them, if He did not truly suffer. O thou who dost undermine the honour of the faith, in pity leave to the world its one hope! Of him who shall be ashamed of me, saith the Master, will I be ashamed. I find no other ground for shame and contempt than the sufferings of Christ, and in not blushing for these I shall show a holy boldness, a blessed folly. The Son of God is born of a woman: I blush not for this; there is no cause to blush. The Son of God died: this I believe, because it is foolishness to men. He was buried, and the third day He rose again: of this I am persuaded, because it is impossible.‡ . . . Why should the Christ have lived as man if there was nothing human

* "Audite, peccatores, deus melior inventus est." ("Adv Marc.," i. 27.)

† "Phantasma est totum, quod speramus a Christo." ("De Carne Christi," v.)

‡ "Natus est Dei Filius; non pudet quia pudendum est, et mortuus est Dei Filius, prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est, et sepultus resurrexerit, certum est, quia impossible." (Ibid. xv.)

in Him? . . . In such a case He must have been false before God; He must have deceived all ages, all senses—those even of the men who came near to Him and touched Him. We can then speak no more of Jesus Christ as having come down from heaven, but must regard Him as one of a company of strolling players; we may call Him no more the God-Man, but simply a new magician; we see in Him not the priest of our salvation, but a mere theatrical performer."*

This passage is in the best style of Tertullian, though not free from that tinge of irony and defiance which always characterises him. Many more examples of the same kind might be cited, too frequently interspersed with sophistical arguments or biting sarcasms, but also often reaching high poetical effect. What writer ever spoke with more sublimity of the sorrowful and tragic character of death? In the treatise upon Souls we read thus: "We who know the origin of man, know with certainty that death proceeds not from nature, but from sin; hence, though there are many forms of dying, there is not one which can be called gentle. The essential element of death, however easy the death may be, is always a sharp rupture. How can we call by any other name the severance between soul and body—those two substances bound together from the birth like twin sisters? Like a vessel which, having weathered all storms, is sailing under a cloudless sky over glassy waters, gliding along under the soft caresses

* "Ergo jam Christum non de cœlo deferre debueras, sed de aliquo circulatorio cœtu, nec Deum præter hominem, sed magum hominem, nec salutis pontificem, sed spectaculi artificem." ("De Carne Christi," xv.)

of the summer breeze and amid the songs of the sailors, when suddenly it springs a leak, and goes down into the deep;* so does life often make shipwreck in the midst of quiet and seeming security. Let the ship which has carried the soul in safety be sound or unsound, it matters not; the moment comes when the voyage is brought to a sudden end."†

Let us now pass in rapid review the polemical writings of Tertullian during this period. In his treatise against Praxeas he maintained the divinity of Christ, while clearly subordinating the Son to the Father; his writing against Hermogenes is designed to refute the idea of the eternity of matter. His argument with the Jews has come down to us only in an interpolated form. In his other treatises he aims mainly to confute the false idealism of the Gnostics. We shall mention first his great work against Marcion, a document of inestimable value for its comprehensiveness and richness, in which we shall find abundant information bearing on the history of heresies, and the progress of Christian ideas in the second century. The treatises on the Body of Christ, on the Resurrection of the Body, on the Soul, and lastly, that directed against the disciples of Valentinus, belong to the same category, and give evidence of the same bent of mind.

It was this reaction against Gnosticism which gave to all his theology the strongly-marked realism by which it is distinguished. Gnosticism seeks to annihilate nature; it sets a curse upon the material world as the

* "Nullis depugnata turbinibus, adulante flatu, intestino repente perculsu, cum tota securitate desidunt." ("De Anima," lii.)

† Ibid.

creation of an evil deity. In opposition to this view, Tertullian magnifies the beauty and harmony of the visible universe. So long as his realism confines itself within these limits, it is true, and suggests to the hard and hot polemic, pictures full of freshness and grace. He writes to Marcion: "A little flower growing, not in the fair green meadows, but on a thorn-bush; a little sea-shell, not that from which the purple dye is drawn; the wing, I say, not of a proud peacock, but of the humblest of birds,—all these speak the praise of their Maker. It is enough for me to offer thee a rose, to put to silence thy words of scorn for the Creator-God."* He depicts in lofty poetry the resurrection of nature, prophetic of our own resurrection. "The day," he says, "dies in the night, and is buried in darkness.† The glory of the world is covered with a shroud; all is turned to gloom. Sadness, silence, horror, reign over the universe. . . . Nature mourns in sable garments for the lost light. And yet the light revives in beauty, and the sun goes forth like a bridegroom in strength throughout the whole world, triumphing over the night of death; raised from its sepulchre of darkness, rejoicing in its own goodly heritage, till once again it sinks in night.‡ Then in the darkness shine forth the stars, which the day had veiled."

Tertullian gives an equally happy description of the

* "Rosam tibi si obtulero, non fastidies creatorem." ("Adv. Marc.," i. 13, 14.)

† "Dies moritur in noctem et tenebris usquequaquam sepelitur. Funestatur mundi honor." ("De Resurrectione Carnis," xii.)

‡ "Et tamen rursus cum suo cultu, cum dote, cum sole, eadem et integra et tota universo orbi reviviscit." (Ibid.)

resurrection of the earth in spring, when the dismantled trees put on their robe of renewed foliage, and the flowers unfold their brightness. "O admirable wisdom!" he exclaims, "which preserves for us that of which it deprives us, which despoils only to enrich, and destroys only to increase; thus we derive a sort of usurious interest from that which slips from us, and gain by that which we lose.* I may say that restitution is the law of the universe; all that which comes to an end commences anew, and it finishes only to recommence. Nothing dies but that it may live again, and the revolutions of the world are one overwhelming proof of the resurrection.† God had inscribed this on His works before he wrote it in His book. He has placed thee in the school of nature, and has given Nature to be thy prophetess, that thou mightest the more readily believe in the sacred oracles, and that, as His disciple, thou mightest the more easily receive the revelation, from having witnessed its fulfilment, as it were, in all the world around thee."‡

Unhappily Tertullian is not satisfied with admiring nature, and discerning in the material universe a radiation of the higher world of spirit. He makes the two completely one, and regards them as indissolubly united. He even goes so far as to assert that both God and the soul have a corporeal being.‖ He

* "Revera fœnore interitu et injuria usura, et lucro damno." ("De Resur. Carnis," xii.)

† "Totus igitur hic ordo revolubilis rerum testatio est resurrectionis mortuorum." (Ibid.)

‡ "Præmisit tibi naturam magistram, discipulus naturæ, quo statim admittas cum audieris quod ubique jam videris." (Ibid.)

‖ "Contra Marc.," i. 13; "De Anima," iv. 5.

thus becomes a very materialist, and such a creed chimes in only too well with the millennial visions of the Montanists. This gross realism seems at first incompatible with the extreme asceticism of Tertullian, for if the corporeal element is divine, why macerate and destroy the body? This anomaly is explained, if it is borne in mind that Gnosticism, under pretext of despising the body, had gone to the utmost lengths of license. Anti-Gnosticism makes its protest at once against false idealism, and against the moral laxity of its adversaries; and encountering in them this flagrant contradiction, it opposes it with another paradox equally palpable. On the same principle we must account for Tertullian's mistrust of all speculation, which leads him into many a serious error, as if to show that an undue contempt for metaphysics is no less fraught with danger than the opposite extreme. Happily the same moral sentiment which pervaded the writings of all the Fathers of this period, is obvious in those of Tertullian. He believed with all his soul in freedom in God and man, and he thus defended the great doctrine of Christian spirituality against the crafty sophists, who sought to crush it under the weight of dualism.

If we have gained any just impression of Tertullian in the various aspects of his character and genius, we shall subscribe to the judgment passed upon him by Vincent de Lérins. He says: "Who of all his race was ever more instructed and versed in things human and divine? His genius was at once so powerful and so impetuous that he never devoted himself to the study of any doctrine, but he brought to bear on it all

the weight of his reason, or pierced through all its intricacies with his penetrating glance.* Who can sufficiently extol his eloquence? There is a sort of necessity in his logic which forces conviction on those whom it cannot persuade; every word conveys a striking thought, and every thought is a triumph over his opponents.† This his adversaries know well, for he has come down like a thunderbolt, crushing the dead mass of their blasphemous writings. He is among the Latins what Origen is among the Greeks—the greatest of all."‡

Vincent de Lérins, in placing side by side the names of Origen and Tertullian, ventures on one of those bold antitheses in which the ardent African himself delighted. In truth, these two men contrast with each other in every feature. On the one hand, we have a genius large and calm as a summer sea, serene in all its depth and breadth; on the other, we have a torrent foaming and eddying between narrow banks. On the one hand, we have a noble and lofty toleration, a sympathetic nature, everywhere seeking and finding allies for its cause, quick in discerning the points of contact between Christianity and all that had gone before it; on the other, a haughty intolerance, everywhere seeking and finding foes. The one interposes between hostile parties; he fulfils the part of a firm

* "Ingenio vero nonne tam gravi ac vehementi excelluit, ut nihil sibi pene ad expugnandum proposuit, quod non aut acumine irruperit, aut pondere eliserit." (Vincent de Lérins, "Commonitor.," xxiv.)

† "Cujus quot pene verba, tot sententiæ sunt; quot sensus tot victoriæ." (Ibid.)

‡ "Nam sicut ille apud Græcos, ita hic apud Latinos princeps." (Ibid.)

and conciliatory mediator between ancient philosophy and the Gospel; the other will hear of no such reconciliation; to him the past is all accursed. The former takes pleasure in calm discussions, in conferences peacefully conducted, and in which mutual respect is shown; the latter will not suffer a heretic to speak, or if he deigns to argue with him, he opens the argument with outrage and invective. Origen and Tertullian both resisted the pretensions of the hierarchy, but the polemics of Tertullian were as full of vehemence and passion as those of the great Alexandrine of gentleness and forbearance. Both fell into error on many points, but Origen erred on the side of too abstract speculation, Tertullian on the side of too absolute materialism. The eloquence of the one is broad and transparent—a noble, full, majestic river, like his genius; the eloquence of the other is a turbid mountain torrent. Origen's words flash like lightning; Tertullian's roll like thunder. Origen appeals primarily to the powers of intelligent thought, he speaks as a Christian philosopher to philosophers; Tertullian as a tribune passionately haranguing the throng on the highway; he is the ancient orator, using vehement gestures, vivid images, pathetic appeals. In both, however, we find perfect sincerity, and an equal love to Christ and to truth. Hence their great influence in the Church. Thus, then, two heretics are recognised even by the stern guardian of tradition which proscribed them, as the two grandest representatives of the Church of the third century; and the judgment of Vincent de Lérins has been confirmed by posterity.

§ III. *Cyprian and Arnobius.*

It is a striking proof of the influence exercised, in spite of his Montanist views, by Tertullian after his death, that the chief of the hierarchical party in Carthage in the third century openly declared himself his disciple. Cyprian, who had been his most determined opponent on ecclesiastical questions, used to call for his writings every day, saying, "Give me the master." In the apologist and theologian he forgot the schismatic, and admiration made him just.* Through his medium, many of Tertullian's ideas were to become current in the Church; they were transmitted through his writings in a softened and moderated form, and, by a singular diversion from their original intention, were made to contribute, as they flowed through a new channel, to the strength of the hierarchy.

Thascius Cæcilius Cyprian was born at Carthage, in high station, and in the midst of paganism.† His father was a man of wealth and influence, holding important offices. He was a senator in the capital of proconsular Africa. The young patrician saw a fine career open before him, and his brilliant talents well fitted him to adorn it. He possessed keen literary tastes, and while studying jurisprudence with a view to filling subsequently some office in the State, he devoted himself assiduously at the same time to the

* "Nunquam Cyprianum absque Tertulliani lectione unum diem præteriisse, ac sibi crebro dicere: *Da Magistrum.*" (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," liii.)

† See, for the life of Cyprian, his works, and his biography, by the Deacon Pontius; St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxvii.; Lenain de Tillemont, "Mémoires," IV. 45; "Vie de St. Cyprian," Paris, 1747 (an excellent anonymous monograph); Bœhringer, I. 375; Gregory Nazianzen, "Oratio," xviii.

cultivation of letters, and, while still very young, became a professor of rhetoric.* In an age when all free expression of opinion was silenced, literary instruction acquired an especial importance in cities like Carthage, which were the nurseries of civilisation and centres of government. Cyprian was surrounded with too many temptations in his high position, and was too feeble in moral principle, not to fall into the vices common to the young pagans of his day. He has himself recorded his youthful excesses with unsparing frankness. As a Christian, he passes judgment on his life as a pagan, in the light of a renewed conscience, and does not seek by any excuse or palliative to cover the past. "When I still lay," he says, "in darkness and deep night, tossed about on the stormy billows of the age, drifting uncertainly hither and thither, unknowing what to do with my life, a stranger to truth and light,† I regarded as incredible and impossible that which Divine mercy proffers for my salvation, I mean that regeneration, that washing with pure water, that putting off of the old nature, that change of soul and spirit promised, while the same body is still retained. . . . How shall a man be taught sobriety who has accustomed himself to sumptuous living every day? How shall one who has been wont to walk proudly in garments of purple and gold, content himself with a simple, plebeian garb? Can one who has aspired to

* "Primum gloriose rhetoricam docuit." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxvii.)

† "Ego cum in tenebris atque in nocte cæca jacerem, cumqus in salo jactantis saeculi nutabundus ac dubius vestigiis oberrantibue fluctuarem vitæ meæ nescius, veritatis ac lucis alienus." (Cyprian, "De Gratia Dei," 4.)

the fasces, be made willing to renounce honours and retire into obscurity? The passions weave invincible spells, to which those who have once known them must always yield. Strong drink will stimulate their desire after it, pride will inflate and anger inflame them; covetousness will make them greedy, cruelty will urge them on to crime, and they will pass from the intoxication of ambition to that of sensuality. So I said to myself: for being myself a slave to these sinful desires, and never dreaming to be freed from them, I voluntarily accepted their yoke, and, despairing of a better life, I clung to my perversity as if it were a part of my very self."*

It is clear from this passage, that even during his life of sin, Cyprian was not utterly insensible to the appeals of the Gospel; an arrow had fixed in his heart, and he tried in vain to draw it out. Opportunities of entering into relations with Christians had not been wanting to him in his native city. If we may believe St. Jerome, his first serious impression was received from reading the prophet Jonah. Living himself in another Nineveh, no less corrupt than the Assyrian city, the same call to repentance seems to have reached his heart, which so many ages before had bowed in humiliation an entire idolatrous people.† But the decisive call reached him through a priest named

* "Ut ipse quam plurimis vitæ prioris erroribus implicitus tenebar, quibus exui me posse non crederem, sic vitiis adhærentibus obsecundans eram et desperatione meliorum malis meis veluti jam propriis ac vernaculis offavebam." (Cyprian, "De Gratia Dei," 4.)

† "Proponamus nobis beatum Cyprianum qui, cum prius idolatriæ assertor fuisset in tantam gloriam venit eloquentiæ, ut oratoriam doceret Carthagine, audisse sermonem Jonæ et ad pœnitentiam conversum." (St. Jerome, "In Jon.," iii.)

Cæcilius, one born, like himself, a pagan. This man, who was probably attached to Cyprian by bonds of friendship and kindred, was bent with his whole soul on the conversion of his friend; this he made his constant concern, his great work, deeming that a whole lifetime of prayer and pious labour was richly repaid by the gain of a single soul to Jesus Christ. Christian proselytism still retained its vitality; it was as earnest as it was extensive in its operations, and while it did not neglect to cast its wide net over entire peoples, it could also, where occasion served, concentrate its efforts with admirable perseverance and energy upon a single soul. In order to remove his friend from every adverse influence, and to watch over him with the more unremitting and jealous care, Cæcilius took him into his own home. He was a married man and the father of several children, and he thought, with reason, that the pure atmosphere of a Christian family would act favourably upon the heart of Cyprian, and would be more effectual than many words in giving him a disgust to the licence of pagan manners.* His expectations proved correct. The accomplished and profligate young rhetorician soon learned, under the influence of one whom he loved as a father, that the natural heart can be entirely changed, and he acknowledged, in his own experience, that that which is impossible with men is possible with God. A bond of tender and holy affection was thus formed for ever between Cyprian and Cæcilius; the former joined the name of his father in the faith to his own, and the latter, when dying, committed his family to his faithful

* Pontius, "Vita Cypr."

disciple. After being proved as a catechumen, Cyprian witnessed at length the dawn of the solemn day on which he was to be admitted into the Church. He was filled with so great a joy that he lost all measure in its expression, and in his enthusiasm he ascribed to the waters of baptism a transformation, of which the sacrament was in truth but the sign and seal. It is impossible to read without emotion his description of the great change in his inner life. "When my stains," he says, "had been washed away in the life-giving water, a pure and heavenly light was diffused through my quieted heart. So soon as by the breath of the Spirit I was born again, all my doubts were suddenly removed, the gates of truth were opened to me, my night was turned to day."* Thus set, as he himself says, upon a mountain-top, he saw everything in its real position, and in its true light,† and despised all that before had beguiled and led him astray. Pagan society, looked at from this luminous height, appeared utterly loathsome, and he turned away from it for ever. Thus, to use the expression of St. Augustine, a new Cyprian took the place of the old.‡ He was not a man to do anything by halves. Like Tertullian, he had hot African blood in his veins, though he was capable of more self-restraint than that great master. He burst with one effort all the chains of his old life, and renounced at once all the advantages it offered. He

* "Patere clausa, lucere tenebrosa." ("De Gratia Dei," 4.)

† "Paulisper te crede subduci in montis ardui verticem celsiorem." (Ibid., 6.)

‡ "Evertit veterem Cyprianum et novum Cyprianum ædificavit in se." (St. Augustine, "Sermon," CXIX. iii.)

sold his possessions,* and became a vigorous ascetic; he wished to eschew everything that might remind him of the hated past. "Henceforth," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "he had nothing but contempt for the world; he forsook all the pomps and vanities of the age, and subjected his body to the most severe mortifications."† He observed, however, reasonable moderation in his self-inflicted penances. He did not go from one extreme to another, and while renouncing the vanities of the world, he did not seek by ostentatious austerities, glory of another kind, but no less flattering to the proud heart of man. His dress was simple, but vanity did not, as in the case of Diogenes, peer forth through rents in his mantle. His appearance was full of grave dignity; it at once inspired confidence and respect;‡ and though he lived in seclusion, his high social position, the lustre of which followed him even into his retirement, his great talents, his fervent piety, and his large almsgivings, speedily won for him much esteem and affection in the Church of Carthage. The more he crept into the shade, the more were all eyes fixed upon him. Immediately upon his conversion, he mounted the breach to defend his new convictions; to this work he devoted his extensive learning, his noble faculties, and a talent of language which borrowed greatness from the noble cause in which he used it, and to which his glowing faith communicated the spark of inspiration. "Of what avail to him had been his eloquence," says Augustine, "while he was still

* "Christianus factus, omnem substantiam suam pauperibus erogavit." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxvii.)

† Gregory Nazianzen, "Orat.," xv.

‡ Pontius, "Vita Cypr.," iv.

a pagan?" It was in his hand a precious cup from which he drank and from which he poured forth poison.* When by the goodness of God he had been enlightened, he became a vessel unto honour in the hand of God. Glory and praise to Him, who in justifying by faith the soul of His servant, snatched him from the service of impiety, and made his word a sharp two-edged sword. The noble instrument of his eloquence, which had beforetime served to adorn the deadly doctrine of devils, was henceforward used for the edification of the Church. That voice, which had been the martial trumpet animating the soldiers of the father of lies, now sent forth its sound only to sustain the courage of the martyr-saints, who, under their captain, Christ, overthrow the wicked one, while they lay down their lives for their Master. The pious and holy words of Cyprian, freed from the obscuring vapours of pagan superstition, gave forth a pure and heavenly brightness.† Before undertaking the defence of Christian truth, Cyprian diligently studied it himself, first in the sacred Scriptures, then in the writings of his forerunners in the faith, especially those of Tertullian.

We have four treatises written by him before his elevation to the episcopate. His letter to Donatus magnifies the greatness of the Divine grace which had raised him from so low a deep. In these pages we discern the former professor of rhetoric, who does not practise in his language the same ascetic principles

* "Tanquam poculo pretioso et bibebat mortiferos et proponebat errores." (St. Augustine, "Sermon.," CXII. ii.)

† "Cujus pio et sancto, non jam fabulosos fumos emovente sed dominica luce radiante eloquio." (Ibid., CXII. iv.)

by which he governs his life; his discourse trains after it, like a toga, the long folds of its redundant periods. But the thoughts expressed are so truly Christian, the sentiments bear the impress of such deep sincerity, that their oratorical treatment cannot nullify their force. His treatise against the Vanity of Idols, is borrowed in great part from the "Octavius" of Minutius Felix. His tract on Testimony is a simple repertory of Scripture quotations divided into three books: the first treats of the relations of Judaism and Christianity, the second of the Incarnation, and the third of the morality of the Gospels. This work was designed to establish the faith of a young Christian named Quirinus. Possibly we must assign to this period his treatise addressed to virgins, which breathes the severe asceticism of Tertullian. In his early works, Cyprian displays little originality; he does not feel the need of giving fresh life to his subject by individual reflection; he willingly accepts already existing formulas of thought. These he expresses with clearness and eloquence, but does not connect them by a chain of arguments. It is at once evident that he will not rise to eminence as a theologian. His great abilities will find their scope in another sphere.

He was soon raised to the bishopric by one of those imperative elections, in which men loved to recognise the Divine will. He had only been newly consecrated to the priestly office, when he was constrained by acclamation to accept the highest function in the Church. The Christians were the more enthusiastic in their attachment to him, the more he was hated and

ridiculed by the pagans. The latter, enraged at his conversion, and irritated by his powerful writings, heaped insults upon him.* In vain did he seek to escape from the urgent solicitations of the Christians of Carthage, dreading the result; they followed him even into his dwelling, and unless he fled like a malefactor, he could do no other than yield to their strong desire. They were thus eager to place him at their head, because they felt that in him they would find the firm and wise pilot so much needed by the Church in the perilous days at hand. His election was opposed by some old members of the clergy of this great Church, who were annoyed by so marked a preference of a younger man, and one whom they looked upon as inexperienced. They forgot that that which has been well called the Divine art of governing, is a gift and an instinct rather than an acquired science. From this party the new bishop was to meet with serious obstacles. But if he was young in the faith, he had already the maturity of years, and that richer maturity of moral character, which in some favoured individuals is reached even in early life. "Where is the man," we read in his biography by the Deacon Pontius, "who having grown old in the faith, and having listened for long years to the sound of the Divine word, has done such great things as this neophyte, but just initiated into our mysteries, and already leaving far behind him his elders in age and in the faith? It is not usual to reap as soon as one has sown; no man gathers grapes from a vine just planted; none seeks fruit on a young

* The pagans called him *Coprian* (from κόπρος, dunghill), instead of Cyprian.

sapling. But in Cyprian everything has advanced to a rapid maturity."*

Once elevated to this high rank, he gave full proof of his fitness for it. He had not aspired to it, but he would not under any pretext derogate from the dignity of the office by concessions which, in lowering his own authority, would have done injustice, as he thought, to the sacred trust he held. We shall not enter now into the detail of his conflicts with the numerous adversaries he encountered, for this would be to anticipate the history of the internal crises of the Church. We shall simply trace the outline of Cyprian's career, as a bishop and a Christian. The numerous letters which he wrote under various circumstances, and particularly in the retirement from which, for a long time, he issued directions to his flock, furnish us with the most valuable documentary information, first about himself, and then about the numberless difficulties in the midst of which he had to hold the helm.

Cyprian was essentially an advocate for governmental authority, though without any vulgar ambition for himself. He was the best and noblest representative of the hierarchical party, and thus repaired the injury done to that party by such men as Zephyrinus and Callisthus. To him was due the ultimate triumph of the hierarchy, although he withstood it when it sought to effect its crowning usurpation at Rome. Allowing for the difference of the times, of modes of civilisation and of thought, Cyprian reminds us in more than one respect of Ignatius, the great bishop of the second

* Pontius, "Vita Cypr.," ii.

century. More prudent, more patient in awaiting the crown of martyrdom, he resembles Ignatius, especially in the high estimation in which he held the office of bishop, because of the elevated ideal he cherished of that office. The function of a bishop is a great and glorious one in his eyes, because he sees in it such great duties to be performed. He is guided by the highest motives, and thinks only of the good of the Church, which he unhappily identifies with a purely external unity.

As soon as he entered upon his office, it became evident that he possessed the gift of governing souls. The Deacon Pontius writes: "Such grace and holiness beamed from his face, that he inspired with respect all who beheld him. His countenance was at once frank and thoughtful: he was grave without dulness, gentle without weakness, and combined all these various qualities in such a manner, that it was difficult to say whether he was the more to be loved or revered; indeed none could doubt that he was worthy of both love and reverence."*

It would have been impossible to withhold affectionate respect from so disinterested and generous a bishop as Cyprian. He showed unwearying devotedness to all the sufferers of his flock; he hesitated at no sacrifice which could bring solace to the poor or to the prisoners. He had sold all his possessions soon after his conversion, that he might distribute to such as had need. A country house with which he had parted came back into his possession by some circumstance with which we are not acquainted; he would have sold it

* Pontius, "Vita Cypr.," vi.

again, but that he feared to attract the attention of the persecutors; it was soon known, however, what became of the income he derived from it. Almost the whole sum was divided amongst indigent members of the Church. "I implore you," he wrote to his clergy, "take peculiar care of the widows, the sick, and the poor. If you find some in needy circumstances among the strangers, take all the sums necessary from the money which I left with Rogatian, our fellow-labourer in the priesthood.* Lest that fund should be exhausted, I have sent you a fresh supply by the acolyte Naricus, that you may be able promptly and generously to succour our brethren in distress." † Such messages as these occur again and again in his letters. With reference to the Christians in prison, he writes: "Let nothing be wanting to those to whom no honour is wanting." ‡ He set on foot liberal collections for those who were sentenced to work in the mines, and the primacy he is always most eager to assert for himself is that of giving. He is jealous that not the faintest suspicion of interested motive should rest upon any minister of the Church, and he severely blames one priest, who allowed himself to be named in a will as trustee of the property of one Christian. "Those," he says, "who are honoured to be in the priesthood, ought to attend only to the things of the altar, to sacrifice and prayer.§ It is written that he who

* "Sumptus suggeratis de quantitate mea propria." ("Epist.," vii.)

† "Quæ quantitas ne forte jam universa erogata sit, misi aliam portionem, ut largius et promptius circa laborantes fiat operatio." (Ibid.)

‡ "Ne quid ad curam desit iis quibus ad gloriam nihil deest." (Ibid., i.) § "Non nisi altari et sacrificiis deservire." (Ibid. i. 1.)

fights for God must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life. If these words are addressed to all Christians, with how much greater emphasis do they apply to those who are entirely devoted to Divine things!" In the fear lest any low or interested motive should be supposed to bias the prayers of the clergy, he forbade prayer to be publicly offered for those who had made any legacy to a priest or deacon.

Cyprian's charity never degenerates into weakness. He possessed that faculty of organisation which is an essential element of the genius of governing. Every thing in his Church was done in due order; and alms, so far from being given at hazard, were distributed with great prudence. A wise regulation made by the bishop, appointed frequent visitations of the poor, so that the help given might be proportioned to their necessities, and not continued longer than was required.* We shall see that this regulation raised serious difficulties in his way, but we nevertheless regard it as a proof of his special fitness for the government of a great Church. While Cyprian thus aims at a steady maintenance of the hierarchy, he yet does not desire an unlimited extension of its authority. He tries to act in harmony with his clergy, and to have his measures sustained by the assent of the Christian community. "I have come to the resolution," he writes to his priests, "to do nothing of myself, without your opinion and the consent of the people."† Nevertheless, he governs his Church with a firm hand. He feels

* "Epist.," xli.

† "Quando a primordio episcopatus mei statuerim nihil sine consilio vestro et sine consensu plebis mea privatim sententia gerere." (Ibid., xiv. 4.)

that the mainspring of the whole must be touched by him; he has an eye for everything—nothing escapes him, from the smallest matter of detail to the most open irregularity or menacing division. His authority is all the more firmly established because it is exercised in so much love. Cyprian is not so much a bishop keeping jealous watch over his own rights, as he is a shepherd bearing the sacred burden of souls. He is not willing that one of his flock should wander or be lost. He would like to be present in every dwelling, and to rule his great family as a good father rules his house. Especially did he long to lighten with his presence the dark abodes where the confessors lay in chains, and to carry comfort, encouragement, and strength to his brethren in poverty or sickness. "Would God," he writes from the retreat to which he had fled that he might escape certain death, and thus be enabled a little longer to keep watch over the flock—"would God I were not hindered by distance and by duty from being present in your midst!* With what readiness and joy would I fulfil my sacred ministry among you, my heroic brethren, and show to you the depth of my tender affection!" He commends the sick, with peculiar earnestness, to the care of the clergy, regarding them also as God's confessors. "He who has accepted suffering and death, as under the eye of God, has endured all that it was God's will he should endure. He has not been wanting in the spirit of martyrdom, but martyrdom has not come to him."† . . . Again

* "Utinam loci et gradus mei conditio permitteret, ut ipse nunc præsens esse possem!" ("Epist.," xii. 1.)

† "Non enim ipse tormentis, sed tormenta ipsi defuerunt." (Ibid.)

he says, on the outbreak of a schism: "What a grief is it to me to be far from you, and only able to exhort you to act according to the Gospel of Christ. It was not, then, sorrow enough for me to be exiled for two years, not to be able, alas! any more to see your faces, to look into your eyes, to weep day and night over this separation, because, though raised to the high rank of a bishop, I could neither see you nor receive your embraces; to this desolation of soul is added the grief of being unable, in such a time of anxiety, to hasten to you."* Cyprian could say with St. Paul, "Who is offended, and I burn not?" We have already quoted the touching words in which he expresses his deep grief at the numerous apostasies which dishonoured the Church of Carthage. His heart bleeds with these wounds, and by the agonised tone of his lamentation we can measure the intensity of his love for souls.

Cyprian combines with this devoted affection a practical sagacity, which always leads him to perceive at once the right course to take. He gave the most striking and decisive proof of this when he had the courage to leave Carthage, just as the persecution under Decius broke out. To do so cost him a most painful sacrifice. He had read with admiration the burning pages, in which he whom he called his master had condemned flight in the presence of danger. He knew that a large party in his own Church shared this strong opinion, which had on its side all the prestige of heroism. Cyprian had enemies eager to cast a reproach upon him. Obviously the most easy and the most

* "Ipse singulos aggredi." ("Epist.," xliii. 4.)

glorious course for him to pursue, would have been to remain at Carthage. Already the populace had more than once raised the cry, "Cyprian to the lions!" The crown of martyrdom, rest from his labours, glory in heaven and fame upon earth, would all have been achieved at once by the bishop, if he had simply prolonged his stay in his native town. But he was guided by higher considerations; he knew that duty comes before glory, and that the matter of supreme importance is to keep the charge committed to us, without impatiently seeking to exchange it for one more full of glory and of peril. Cyprian remembered the commandment of the Lord, who had enjoined flight in time of persecution, whenever it could be accomplished without cowardly denial of the faith. He knew how greatly the Church of Carthage stood in need of his direction; the path of duty seemed to him plain. To remain in a city where he was at once so well known and so deeply hated was to court certain death. He therefore took the course least easy to himself. "We are bound," he said, "to consider the general good, and, whatever pain it may cost us, to leave the city, that our presence may not exasperate the hatred and rage of the pagans."* From the retired place where he remained in concealment, he continued to direct his Church by frequent letters, thus carrying on in a manner the pastoral supervision of his flock.† It is in this correspondence that he displays especially his skill in the delicate art of controlling and directing

* "Oportet nos tamen paci communi consulere, et interdum, quamvis cum tædio animi nostri, deesse vobis" ("Epist.," vii.)

† "Quomodo possum visito vos litteris meis." (Ibid., xliii. 1.)

other minds. He maintains his authority over men with a gentle firmness, which is all the more irresistible because it never puts any on the defensive by arrogance of tone. His language adapts itself with admirable ease to the temperament and condition of those whom he addresses. In giving directions to his clergy, his style is clear, exact, and concise as a command; but it is a command given without harshness and without pride. Cyprian is full of love, of enthusiasm, even of respect, when he endeavours to animate the courage of the confessors; he never forgets to treat them with all gentle consideration, even when he feels bound to oppose them, and his severity is tempered by the remembrance of their sufferings. In his correspondence with the heads of other Churches, he expresses himself with clearness and with judicial authority on the most critical questions raised by the ecclesiastical controversies. He dispels all misunderstandings, and wins over those most prejudiced against him. He is quite prepared also, if necessary, to act with vigour and decision, and he is as bold in his opposition to the Bishop of Rome as to the martyrs, when the authority and independence of the episcopal office are called in question.

He is never more eloquent, however, than when addressing Christians under circumstances of peril. He is like one of those great generals who are inspired by the presence of danger; he speaks such words as kindle thousands of souls by the single spark flashed from a heroic spirit, words which bow trembling multitudes beneath their mighty sway, as the strong wind bows the fields of corn. Writing to the Christians of the little town of Thibaris, whom he was prevented

from visiting according to promise, by the fresh outbreak of persecution, he says: "You must know that the day of desolation has dawned upon us, and that the close of the present age and the coming of Antichrist are at hand. Let us be ready for the combat; let us set our minds now on nothing but the glory of life eternal and the crown of the confessors. We are on the eve of a conflict sharp and terrible. The soldiers of Christ must arm themselves for it by an incorruptible faith and an indomitable courage, so that they may drink every day of the cup of the blood of Christ, and be ready to shed their blood for Him.* Let no one, then, desire or expect anything from this dying age;† let each one of us follow the Christ eternal. . . . . It ill becomes a soldier to speak only of peace, and to shrink at the sound of war. Does not the Lord go before us in this holy warfare, as the pattern of lowliness and meekness, of long-suffering and patience? He was the first to do that which He desires us to do, and He has suffered for us all that He exhorts us to suffer. Be not terrified at the thought of the dangers of flight. Let not the solitude of the deserts into which you must steal, fill you with horror or alarm. He is not alone who has Christ with him in his flight. If some fugitive Christian has been killed by a brigand in a lonely spot, if he has fallen a prey to wild beasts, to hunger, or thirst, or cold, or tempest, Jesus Christ has been the witness of His faithful soldier fighting unto death. His martyrdom is well attested, and will be surely re-

* "Idcirco se quotidie calicem sanguinis Christi bibere." ("Epist.," lviii. 1.)

† "Ut nemo quidquam de sæculo jam moriente desideret." (Ibid., lviii. 2.)

corded by Him, who knows and who crowns His true confessors."* On another occasion, Cyprian addressed these pathetic words to his own Church, warning it against schism: "My beloved brethren, I beseech you not to lend a daring ear to pernicious words and deceitful speeches; take not darkness for light, night for day, hunger for the bread that nourishes, thirst for the water that quenches thirst, poison for medicine, death for life."†

We shall for the present confine our attention to the conflicts in which Cyprian was engaged within his own Church. We have seen that from the time he entered upon his office, a hostile faction was formed against him among the members of the Church at Carthage. We shall have to inquire presently whether this party was actuated merely by motives of personal ambition, or whether it did not represent, in the capital of proconsular Africa, that party of resistance which everywhere opposed the encroachments of the hierarchy, and which we have observed in all the great ecclesiastical centres of the day. Unhappily, the case was not parallel between Carthage and Rome. At Carthage, the hierarchy was much better represented than was the cause of liberty, and Cyprian stood on a far higher platform both of piety and disinterestedness than his adversaries. The most serious difficulties arose in the Church during the absence of the bishop. The confessors who had heroically endured a painful captivity for the name

* "Sufficit ad testimonium martyrii sui testis ille, qui probat martyres et coronat." ("Epist.," lviii. 4.)

† "Ne pro luce tenebras, pro die noctem, pro cibo famem, pro potu sitim, venenum pro remedio, mortem pro salute sumatis." (Ibid., xviii. 4.)

of Christ, taking advantage of the enthusiastic affection of which they were the objects, held themselves to be superior to the disciplinary laws of the Church, and granted to Christians who had fallen, not merely an urgent recommendation to the Church, but even complete and immediate restoration to its fellowship. They thus raised a serious question of discipline, and provoked a sharp conflict of power at Carthage. Cyprian felt it incumbent on him to defend at once the episcopal authority and the disciplinary laws of the Church. He obtained the concurrence of the leading Churches of the West, his adversaries submitted one after another, and everything seemed to promise a peaceful termination to the contest, when the regulation referring to the distribution of alms, already mentioned, revived all the bitterness of party feeling. It was instigated by the Deacon Felicissimus, who was soon after irregularly raised to the priesthood by Novatus, one of the priests in opposition. The adversaries of Cyprian brought vehement recriminations against him for the broader views he had adopted in matters of discipline—views which kept the happy medium between laxity and extreme severity; they accused him of favouring a loose morality, and constituted themselves the champions of a life of ascetic rigour. On his return to Carthage he wrote in opposition to them his treatise on fallen Christians, and called a synod of the bishops of the province (A.D. 251). His opponents split into two parties, each naming a bishop of its own. Fortunatus was chosen by the less intolerant section, and Maximus by the more rigid schismatics. Both were condemned by the first synod of Carthage, as the result of which,

Novatus proceeded to Rome to seek a larger sphere of influence, and associating himself with Novatian, succeeded temporarily in dividing the whole Church. This entire controversy was summed up by Cyprian in his treatise against the Novatians, and the conclusions which he drew from it in favour of the hierarchy were presented by him with equal clearness and vigour in his celebrated treatise on the Unity of the Church. It was also at this time he wrote his apologetic treatise addressed to Demetrianus, in which he vindicated the new religion from the reproach of having brought down upon the world the scourges with which it was desolated. His treatise on Mortality, which is an epitome of the discourse delivered by him to his Church in the midst of the frightful epidemic which laid waste the city, is of the same date, as are also his writings on Almsgiving and on the Lord's Prayer.

One more conflict yet awaited him; and he who had so brilliantly represented the hierarchical party, was transformed by shifting circumstances into the champion of liberty. Cyprian was anxious to preserve episcopal authority in its integrity, in opposition to encroachments from above as well as from below, and he was prepared to defend it against the Bishop of Rome as firmly as against the Presbyterian party. Thus, when a dispute arose between him and Stephen on the subject of the baptism of heretics, which he declared to be insufficient, he maintained his principle as tenaciously as he had held his ground against Felicissimus and Novatus. No consideration could make him yield. All who look upon the decisions of the Bishop of Rome as of final authority, must hold that

the great Bishop of Carthage died a schismatic. But, on the same grounds, the whole Church of Africa in the third century merits the same appellation; for at the second synod of Carthage, Cyprian, supported by the concurrence of a synod of the bishops of Asia Minor, caused his opinions to be adopted by all his colleagues. He shortly after wrote his letter to Fides on the Baptism of Children, and his treatises on Patience and Envy.

The hour of final conflict for Cyprian was at hand. Valerian had just promulgated the edict of persecution. The Bishop of Carthage had a secret presentiment of his approaching end, and he looked forward to it with unmixed joy, for he knew that he would leave behind him a Church well-organised and victorious over schism. Xystus, Bishop of Rome, had fallen a victim in the catacombs, and Cyprian read in this death a prophecy of his own. He had already prepared his Church for persecution by his Exhortation to Martyrdom. He himself was first exiled to Curubis, an obscure village in the neighbourhood of Carthage. There he was warned in a dream of his approaching end. He was brought back to the town, and confined in some gardens belonging to him, to await the pleasure of the new proconsul. Having heard that some lictors were about to seize his person, to carry him to Utica, whither that governor had gone, he hid himself in the city, being fully resolved to die in the place in which he had exercised his bishopric. He expresses this desire with sublime simplicity in the last letter written by him to his Church: "Word had been brought me, beloved brethren, that lictors were to be sent to convey

me to Utica, and some dear friends urged me to leave my gardens, and hide myself in the city. I thought well to act on their advice; for it is meet that a bishop should confess his Saviour in the city where he has exercised his office, that the glory of his good confession may be reflected on his people.* In truth, the words which a martyr-bishop speaks at such a moment, he speaks under divine inspiration in the name of all.† The honour of our illustrious Church would have been compromised if I, its bishop, had placed myself, as it were, at the head of another Church, submitting to be condemned in Utica, and undergoing in that town the martyrdom which is to exalt me into the presence of God. No; for my own sake, and for yours, I will confess Jesus Christ, and will suffer for Him, in your midst;‡ I will go to my God amid the incense of your prayers, which must ascend to Him continually on my behalf. We shall await here in seclusion the return of the proconsul to Carthage, to learn from him the decision of the emperor with regard to Christian bishops or laics, and to say to him that which God shall at the moment give us to speak. And do you, my beloved brethren, preserve in peace the discipline founded upon the commandments of the Lord, as I have taught you both by word and practice. Let none of you cause any offence among the brethren,

* "Quod congruat episcopum in ea civitate, in qua ecclesiæ dominicæ præest, illic Dominum confiteri." ("Epist.," lxxxi. 1.)

† "Quodcunque enim sub illo confessionis momento confessor episcopus loquitur, adspirante Deo ore omnium loquitur." (Ibid.)

‡ "Quandoquidem ego et pro me et pro vobis apud vos confiteri et ibi pati et exinde ad Dominum proficisci orationibus continuis deprecer." (Ibid.)

nor expose himself needlessly to persecution. It will be time to speak when you are taken and brought before the tribunal. Jesus Christ, who is in us, will speak for us in that hour; He prefers a faithful testimony to rash imprudence. If there are any measures to be taken, we will decide on them together under the eye of God, before the proconsul shall have pronounced my condemnation. Dearly beloved brethren, may our Lord preserve you from all evil in His Church!"

This letter is the dying testament of Cyprian. It exhibits the whole man, with his natural prudence, which forbids the useless braving of persecution; with his calm courage, his absolute devotion to the Church, for which he has lived and on which he is anxious to reflect the glory of his martyrdom; and finally, with that concern for order and unity which so strongly characterises his whole career as bishop. These last words give us also a deep insight into the heart of Cyprian as a Christian; they show his faith in the permanence of inspiration and his clinging to prophetic visions. They exhale, as it were, an odour of mystic fervour.

When the proconsul returned to Carthage, Cyprian was brought before his tribunal. An immense crowd filled the prætorium, brought thither partly by the thirst for vengeance, partly by the desire of witnessing a grand spectacle. The glory of the accused, his recognised and often proved authority in matters of dispute, the fame of his eloquence—all must have tended to stimulate curiosity. While the wrath of the populace was roaring against him (to use the powerful language

of Pontius), and while death-cries were rising from the surging masses of the crowd, he had the consolation of being surrounded by all the Christians in the city, who had hastened to the spot to sustain him by their sympathy and their prayers.*

After his first hearing he was remanded to prison, and passed this last night with his brethren. The next morning he found the whole population of the city assembled, so as to witness every incident of his condemnation. When he arrived in the presence of the proconsul he was bathed in profuse perspiration, and a soldier offered to change garments with him. "It is a needless remedy," he answered, "for ills which will end to-day." The examination was short. The crime, indeed, was patent. "Art thou Thascius Cæcilius Cyprian?" asked the judge. "I am." "The most holy emperors command thee to sacrifice to the gods." "I shall not obey." "Have a care for thy life." "Carry out your orders. In so righteous a cause there is no need for deliberation." This short dialogue pitted the old claim against the new—the old, servile submission to the despotism of the State, against the rights of conscience, the rights of the individual whose citizenship belongs to a higher city. Sentence was at once pronounced. It described Cyprian as the standard-bearer of Christianity in Carthage, and thus paid him the truest homage, for no influence could equal his, and he had carried the Church on with him along the path of mistaken authority, no less than along the path of heroic devotion and self-sacrifice. He was beheaded the same day in the sight of all

* Pontius, 14, 15.

Carthage. His enemies thus used the best means to establish and extend his moral influence, and never was he more truly the head of the Church of Africa, than when the banner which he had been accused of bearing had been dipped in his blood.

Proconsular Africa gave yet one more apologist to the Church—Arnobius of Sicca, who lived at the commencement of the fourth century. Arnobius was a popular rhetorician of a small town of Africa, at a time of deep literary decadence. We may easily imagine, therefore, what were the habits of thought and style acquired in such a school.* Christianity did not divest him of these characteristics ; and when, after attacking it in various writings, he adopted its belief, he defended the faith, as he had assaulted it, without dignity or true eloquence. The seven books of his Apology, written at the commencement of the persecution under Dioclesian,† deserve the severe sentence passed upon them by St. Jerome, when he charged Arnobius with being unequal and confused in style.‡ The author first defends the Church against the ordinary accusations of the pagans, he then endeavours to establish the legitimacy of the Christian faith, and concludes by a violent attack on paganism. The closing portion alone has any value; it contains some important information, showing how deep was the

* "Arnobius sub Diocletiano principe Siccæ apud Africam florentissime rhetoricam docuit." (St. Jerome, "De Viris Illustr.," lxxix.)

† We see in his book, "Disput. adv. Gentes," iv. 36, that, in his time, the Christian temples and the copies of the sacred Scriptures were burnt, which points us to the date indicated.

‡ St. Jerome, "Epist.," xlvi.

degradation of Rome at this period. But Arnobius, forgetting that there are, as St. Paul says, some things not lawful to be uttered, details without reserve, and in language often indecent, the foul offences of paganism against morality. We shall see that his Apology stands in strong contrast with the great Apology of Alexandria. Arnobius delights in vilifying and treading into the dust the nature of man. There could be no surer preparation for religious despotism, which flourishes on the degradation of the soul and conscience. Such a book as that of Arnobius proclaims a new era. The Church, which is about to achieve a victory in the domain of external authority, is already riveting with her own hands, the fetters which will rob her of her true freedom within.

BOOK THIRD.

THE ATTACK AND DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE DOMAIN OF CONTROVERSY.

CHAPTER I.

THE ATTACK.

§ I. *Current Polemics.**

THE pagan reaction which we have described, was in itself an impassioned protest against Christianity. But so intense a hatred could not but find more open and vehement manifestation; it expressed itself sometimes in the murderous clamour of the crowd, sometimes in the light, envenomed arrows of sarcasm, sometimes, on a wider scale, in systematic attacks upon Christianity. Fierce and rude in the mouth of the plebeian or the villager, fine and ironical on the compressed lips of the well-bred scoffer, learned and didactic in the writings of the philosophers, this hatred is equally hot among all ranks and in all grades of culture; popular fanaticism and science, which have combined to re-establish paganism, make common cause against the common enemy.

We shall not recapitulate the vile calumnies against

* Beside the writings of the Fathers or pagan authors of the time, we shall cite from Tschirner's work, "Geschichte der Apologetik."

the Christians, which found currency among the lowest of the people, and which led to the shedding of so much innocent blood. We have already alluded to them more than once in the history of the persecutions, which they did so much to provoke or to justify in the eyes of the ignorant masses. These accusations were founded on the recent origin of Christianity; on the baldness of its worship, which they characterised as atheism; on the pretended immorality of its disciples; on its noble independence of the State in matters of religion; and lastly, upon the calamities and scourges for which it was held responsible, on the pretext that it drew down the anger of the gods.* Such calumnies were made for three centuries the pretext for the judicial conflict between the two religions. We shall notice here only those attacks which elicited in reply the Apology properly so called, that, namely, which is not a mere forensic plea. The modes of attack vary according to the position of the assailants, and it is very interesting to analyse, as it were, the coalition formed by the opponents of Christianity, in order to discover the various currents which thus mingle and become one. The objections of the philosophers were stated in the form of treatises, fragments of which have come down to us. These therefore can easily be known; but apart from this systematic and studied opposition, there was yet another, which represented the current opinion of the cultivated classes, and must be distinguished from mere popular invective. Of this we find the scattered expression in the writings of the apologists of the Church, and we must endeavour to combine

* Tschirner, "Gesch. der Apol.," 223-225.

these fragmentary hints, if we desire to comprehend aright the various obstacles to the progress of Christianity. The dialogue of Minutius Felix, which places before us a pagan of the middle class ignorant of all philosophy, gives us much valuable information as to the opinions that might at that time be entertained of the new religion, by those who were neither priests nor schoolmen. Cæcilius, the opponent of the Christian querist, represents perfectly the man of the world, who belongs to the craft neither of priest nor writer, but who has derived his convictions or his prejudices from the social atmosphere of his age. We must not look for much logic from him; he often expresses ideas contradictory of each other; but they all tend to the same conclusion—the rejection of Christianity.

The language of the cultivated pagan betrays at once great moral and intellectual enervation. We are conscious that he does not belong to an age of bold speculation, in which the mind of man is bent on investigating and explaining everything. Nor does he belong to an age of simple trust, in which all that is marvellous and poetical inspires faith and fervour. We are not dealing with childhood in its candour, nor with youth in its enthusiasm. Here is doubt mingled with superstition; a prudent scepticism which dares not be true to its own consequences, which suddenly pauses on its path, to bow down before the first idol it meets, provided only the idol be of venerable antiquity. Let us not be misled. That genuflexion is not an act of mere hypocrisy, performed simply to deceive the spectators. No; it is a sincere act. The soul has not strength enough either to doubt or to believe thoroughly;

it cannot rest either in negation or in faith; it vacillates between the two, or rather it combines and associates both. At heart there is no faith in the existence of religious truth, and yet the alternative of a frank and decided atheism is rejected. Probability is put in the place of certainty, and from this it is an easy step to substitute antiquity for truth; for let inherent grounds for belief be disallowed, and the balance of probability is on the side of that which is old. Tradition is the crutch of halting creeds, which are no longer able to support themselves. Thus we shall find Cæcilius, after avowing absolute scepticism, casting himself with closed eyes into the arms of the religion of his fathers. If such a course seems full of self-contradiction, it is from an intellectual, not from a moral point of view, for moral feebleness preventing solid convictions, is perfectly in harmony with the cowardly desertion of received opinions. Cæcilius acts in one and the same spirit, whether he expresses universal doubt or makes an unreserved surrender to the gods of his country. The bold affirmations of Christianity are as repugnant to him as its hardy negations. This diseased soul, loving its sickness, and, better still, its ease, shrinks from the manly effort needed in order to grasp a new truth or to reject old error. "How great is the distance," says Cæcilius, "between human weakness and the divine things we inquire into!* We cannot know either that which is far above our heads in the heavens, nor far beneath our feet in the lowest deeps. Such knowledge is forbidden to man, and it would be impious to seek to attain

* "Cum tantum absit ab exploratione divina humana, mediocritas!" (Minutius Felix, "Octav.," v.)

to it. Of two things, one: either truth, ever uncertain, is veiled and hidden from us; or (which is more credible), fortune, unfettered by any law, governs according to its own fitful caprice."* This convenient scepticism does not inspire toleration even in Cæcilius; the *blasé* pagan is irritated by the presence at his side of men who claim to resolve the great questions which weary him, and he is especially indignant that some men without culture, strangers to letters, pursuing menial callings, should dare to speak with absolute certainty of the first principle of all things, unappalled by the majesty of the theme, while philosophy, after the lapse of so many ages, and the tentative systems of so many schools, still utters dubious oracles on the subject.†

It might be imagined that, starting from such a point as this, Cæcilius would be logically led to include paganism in the same sweeping anathema with Christianity, but he obeys dialectic laws of a peculiar kind, which rest on a logic of feeling rather than of thought. He has not the force of character required to make a man consistent with himself, at the risk of compromising ease and comfort. His logic fails because his courage fails, and after a lofty tirade against those who pretend to possess certainty in matters of religion, he himself pays his devout homage to the religion in which he was born. He says:

* "Adeo aut incerta nobis veritas occultatur et premitur; aut, quod magis credendum est, variis et lubricis casibus, soluta legibus, fortuna dominatur." (Minutius Felix, "Octav.," v.)

† "Indignandum audere quosdam et hoc studiorum rudes, literarum profanos, certum aliquid de summa rerum et majestate decernere." (Ibid.)

"Since there is nothing certain in nature except chance, is not the tradition of our fathers the best and most venerable guide we can follow in the pursuit of truth? Let us cleave to the religion they have transmitted to us; let us worship the gods we have been accustomed to worship from our childhood—gods which are familiar to us—and let us beware of entering into discussions about them."* Cæcilius, though he again expresses on several occasions his impious doubts, nevertheless presents a utilitarian apology for paganism; he proves from history that prosperity has never come to those who have forsaken paganism. His argument amounts to this: Nothing can be less certain than the foundations of the ancient faiths, but since, on the other hand, it cannot be proved that they are absolutely false, and since they seem to have conduced to the prosperity of the country, the safest plan is to hold by them. Clearly such an adherence as this to paganism is the last term of scepticism, which, having doubted all else, concludes by doubting itself. If, at the outset, the pagan showed irritation at the strong affirmations of Christianity, he now maligns it because it undermines the base of the worm-eaten edifice of the ancient religions. "Since all nations," says Cæcilius, "agree to recognise immortal gods, though a cloud of mystery conceals their origin and nature, I cannot endure, amidst this universal consent of mankind, the audacity or impious wisdom of these innovators, who seek to overthrow or to enfeeble a

* "Quanto venerabilius ac melius antistitem veritatis majorum excipere disciplinam? religiones traditas colere?" (Minutius Felix., "Octav.," v.)

religion *so old, so useful, so salutary*.* One is compelled to groan at the sight of a league formed against the gods, by men belonging to a miserable, illegal, accursed sect, men who make disciples of the lowest of the people, of silly credulous women, easily misled, if only because of their sex. Thus is formed an impious conspiracy."† Cæcilius repeats, with additions, the common calumnies about the nightly assemblies of the Christians; he thus himself unblushingly exhibits a credulity more senseless than that of any woman in the world, and shows how passion can stultify a naturally acute and discerning spirit.

The blending of scepticism and of servility which characterises this man, who evidently occupied a good position in Roman society, was doubtless common to many of his contemporaries, for it belongs to every age. Many are always found ready to profess a graceful doubt, without formally breaking with religion, and while fully counting on its support in case of extremity. The pagan priests had no surer auxiliaries than these prudent philosophers. They knew that such philosophers were sure to return to them at last; and that, be their life what it might, in death they would cling to the priests, not from any mere human reverence, but prompted by that fear of the unknown, which the soul is not strong enough to brave alone in the last assaults.

After reproaching the Christians with believing in a new God, and overthrowing the national religion,

* "Hanc religionem tam vetustam, tam utilem, tam salubrem, dissolvere." (Minutius Felix, "Octav.," ix.)

† "Homines deploratæ, illicitæ ac desperatæ factionis grassari in deos." (Ibid.)

Cæcilius proceeds to an examination of their doctrines. It is at once obvious that he is but ill-acquainted with them, and has no appreciation of their connection or inner meaning. His judgment of them is dictated by the most superficial notions. He does not rise for a moment above his low and earthly point of view. Sceptic as he is, he does not concern himself at all with the nature of things, with the adaptation of a doctrine to the conditions of man's mind or soul. He has no faith in truth itself; he does not ask, therefore, if a belief is true and reasonable, but simply if it can boast of that which attracts the eye—strength, brilliancy, popularity, success; it is from this outer side alone that he judges. Thus, when he approaches the grand idea of the Divine unity, he does not inquire, like the illustrious philosophers of antiquity, if it is well-founded on grounds that reason and conscience approve. These considerations appear to him supremely indifferent. Listen to his words: "Where is He," he asks; "this one, sole, forsaken God?* What republic, what kingdom has acknowledged Him? He has not even found an asylum in Roman superstition." A solitary and deserted God cannot be a true God: this alone is enough to condemn Him. The pagan cannot heap enough ridicule on the idea of a Providence without which nothing can happen. Such a deity he stigmatises as importunate, and curious even to insolence; and he asks how, while watching over the whole, He could occupy Himself with the details; or how, while absorbed in minutiæ, He could watch the course of the universe?

* "Unde autem est, quis ille, aut ubi? Deus unicus, solitarius, destitutus." (Minutius Felix, "Octav.," x.)

The Christian religion, thus held accursed by the world, pronounces, in return, a curse upon the world, and proclaims its approaching destruction in the flames of a terrible fire, while it promises a resurrection to its own followers. "Two-fold folly!" exclaims Cæcilius, faithful to his materialistic scepticism, which can never pass the limits of visible realities. "The Christians proclaim an end to the sky and stars, which abide when we are gone, and they promise eternity to their dead, to beings born to perish."* It is the immortality of the individual which shocks the pagan. He only mentions, that he may set it aside, the moral argument derived from the Divine justice, to which it must be impossible finally to treat alike the guilty and the innocent; and he concludes his arguments against the resurrection, or, more properly speaking, against the immortality of the soul, with these words, worthy of an Epicurean: "So many generations have followed each other, so many ages have rolled away, and who has ever come back from the tomb?"† To such a man immediate success is the sole criterion of the good and the true. A religion which brings in its train a long series of humiliations and sufferings, which has the cross for its symbol, and the track of which can be traced by the blood of its votaries, is necessarily to him a false religion. Cæcilius cannot conceive of a God in whose sight the vanquished cause may be after all the right. "Where," he asks, "is that God who can bring succour to the dead, while He does nothing for the living? Do not the

* "Gemina dementia! Cœlo et astris quæ sic relinquimus ut invenimus interitum denunciare, sibi mortuis æternitatem repromittere." (Minutius Felix, "Octav.," xi.) † Ibid., xi.

Romans rule and reign without Him? Do they not govern the world and you yourselves?"*

To one who thus regards suffering as a curse and shame, austerity could not appear other than a crime. Accordingly, Cæcilius has only indignant words for the morality of the Christians. "You abstain," he cries, "from lawful pleasures; you eschew feasts and shows and public rejoicings. You will not crown your heads with flowers,† you use no perfumes to anoint your bodies. Pale-faced tremblers,‡ you call indeed for pity! Miserable men, who will find there is no resurrection and who refuse to live now!§ Cease at length to interrogate the Lord of the heavens. Be content with looking to your feet."‖ Cæcilius concludes by parodying the saying of Socrates: "That which is above us is not for us."¶ The judgment passed upon Christianity by this pagan, vindicates, by its utter want of comprehension, that great word of the Master: "I am from above, ye are from below." In truth, the new religion, regarded from below, must necessarily appear in this absurd light. We catch in the tones of Cæcilius an echo of the mocking laugh which interrupted Paul on the Areopagus, when he began to speak of the resurrection. Cæcilius was called Legion, and he has initiated us into the current ideas of the cultivated class of his time.

Christianity encountered even more deadly opposition

* "Ubi Deus ille qui subvenire reviviscentibus potest, viventibus non potest?" (Minutius Felix, "Octav.," xii.)

† "Non floribus caput nectitis." (Ibid.) ‡ "Pallidi, trepidi." (Ibid.)

§ "Ita nec resurgitis, miseri, nec interim vivitis." (Ibid.)

‖ "Satis est pro pedibus adspicere." (Ibid.)

¶ "Quod supra nos, nihil ad nos." (Ibid., xiii.)

among the Jews than among the pagans.* The treatise, "Ad Judæos," ascribed to Tertullian, and the Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, give us an insight into the polemics of the synagogue. The principal points were three. First, the Jews reproached the Christians with abandoning or rejecting the glorious institutions of the Mosaic economy, and with thus uniting themselves with paganism. "That which most astonishes us," they said, "is that you, who pretend to exceptional piety, differ in nothing from the pagans. You observe neither feasts nor sabbaths; you have no circumcision; you flatter yourselves that you please God by neglecting all His commands."† In the second place, the Jews, while admitting that the prophets had indeed foretold a Messiah, would not acknowledge that these prophecies found their fulfilment in Christ. His lowliness was repellent to them.‡ They turned to their sacred books, and gave special prominence to the oracle which declared that the coming of the Messiah should be preceded by the return of Elias. They appealed also to the brilliant representations given in the Old Testament of the age of Messiah, and compared with these glowing pictures the sorrowful circumstances of the life and death of Christ. "Instead of being arrayed in glory," they said, "your pretended Christ is so covered with reproach and dishonour that He has fallen under the

* See Tschirner, "Gesch. der Apol.," 181-189.

† *Οὐδὲ διαλλάσσετε ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν τὸν ὑμέτερον βιον ὅμως ἐλπίζετε τεύξασται ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ μὴ ποιοῦντες αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐντολάς.* (Justin, "Dial. cum Tryph.," 227.)

‡ "Non et nunc adventum ejus expectant, nec alia magis inter nos et illos compulsatio est, quam quod jam venisse non credunt." (Tertullian, "Apologia," xxi.)

most accursed penalty of the Divine law, being put to death on the cross."* The Jews thus laid their own crime to the charge of the Saviour of the world, and true to their materialistic theocracy, rejected Him on the ground of His sufferings, as if these had not been foretold by Isaiah the prophet. Finally, the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ clashed with their rigid monotheism. They could not admit that He was God with God, as the Fourth Gospel expressed it.† Such were their principal objections, diversified indefinitely by the subtlety of their minds and the cunning arguments of their rabbis. They attacked, not unskilfully, the exegetical interpretations of the Old Testament current in the Church, and impugned the credibility of the Gospel narrative.

§ II. *Polemics of the Philosophers in opposition to Christianity.*

(a.) Lucian of Samosata.

Every one of the various schools which exercised an influence on pagan society made an attack upon Christianity from its own special standpoint, and the Church was thus called upon to defend itself against adversaries of every description. Impious Epicureanism, proud Platonism, oriental theosophy, and the subtle and mystical pantheism of Alexandria, —each in turn battered on the breach; and the purer the paganism, the more bitter and zealous was the antagonism to Christianity. No rivalry could by possibility exist between cynical atheism

* Ἐσταυρώθη γάρ. (Justin, p. 249. Compare p. 317.) † Ibid., 274.

and Christian spirituality, as war is not likely to break out between nations placed at the two extremities of the world. But, on the other hand, Neo-Platonism and Christianity, deep and radical as were their differences, both offered a response to the same aspirations, and the philosophers of Alexandria knew well that they could not achieve the moral conquest of the world, unless they supplanted the adherents of the new religion. Therefore Porphyry, a man of far higher type than Lucian, will be a much more determined enemy of the Church; but his very hostility does honour to the Church, since it shows that he has a true appreciation of its power, while the contemptuous cynic confounds it in scorn with the low superstitions of his time, on which he heaps his merciless mockery.

In order rightly to comprehend the attitude of Lucian with regard to Christianity, we must have some idea of his opinions on religion in general, for Christianity is to him only one particular form of religious folly, and he does not accord to it even the distinction of a more marked opposition, or of more bitter irony. We can conceive that the men who were not carried away by the reaction of paganism, and who had preserved their freedom of thought in this unparalleled irruption of the superstitions of every land, would find abundant matter for ridicule in the strange spectacle presented at that time by the Greco-Roman world. Like a guest who has retained the cool use of his faculties in the midst of a scene of riotous feasting, these men were at once disgusted and amused by the wild manifestations of the religious feeling,

which assumed constantly more and more grotesque and monstrous forms. To one who has no comprehension of the aching desire and infinite sadness of the human soul at a distance from God, there is no comedy more ludicrous than that presented by these great religious crises, in which the most visionary notions find a favourable reception, and every impostor is sure of success with some minds influenced by hope and desire. Scorners have no eyes to discern the element of grandeur in all such crises, which accomplish their mission of burying an old, and giving birth to a new world. They see only the incongruity of the blending of expiring religions, the illusions of charlatans and magicians trading on public credulity. Their attention is arrested only by the scenery of the theatre, the strange costumes of the actors, and they pay no heed to the religious drama which is being enacted before their eyes, and of which the most important and thrilling crises always coincide with those periods of renovation and general expectancy, when the minds of men are predisposed to all illusions and chimeras. A thin sardonic smile curls their lips, if they are men of taste and refinement; they laugh, with a broad boisterous laugh, if they are open and avowed cynics. They are not satisfied with ridiculing the follies of their own age alone; they take advantage of the discredit into which the ancient faiths have fallen, to attack these also without scruple; and as they put the new or strange gods which have obtained favour with their contemporaries, in the place of the old, they effectually serve the cause of impiety. Humanity has no worse enemies than these pitiless

scoffers, who rejoice over every downfall. The defenders of the new truths which come to replace old errors, are sometimes tempted to seek support from these men, in their warfare with superstition and prejudice, and to borrow some of the biting sarcasms flung at themselves. Thus the Fathers more than once used the weapons of Lucian in their polemics with paganism. It was the worst policy, for Lucian, like all his class, was not satisfied with rooting out the weeds from the field; he carried away with them the fruitful soil. He destroyed not superstition only, but the very faculty of faith. The human soul, when he has breathed upon it, resembles a desolate region sown with salt; true, no more weeds appear, but absolute barrenness reigns in their stead. There is one thing more deplorable than believing in error, and that is to believe in nothing; this is the essential error, the fundamental aberration of the soul, the invincible obstacle to truth. In our opinion, therefore, Lucian did more harm to Christianity by the manner in which he undermined pagan superstitions, than by his direct attacks. Such a man was the most formidable of all foes, even when he was destroying that which Christianity also aimed to destroy, because he destroyed at the same time that which is the starting-point of all truth, that which may be called the elementary religious feeling—the care for eternal things, the thirst for the infinite and the divine. We shall not confine our observations to those of his writings alone which assail Christianity; we shall characterise the whole of his works, because there is scarcely a page which is not an insult to religion in

itself. We shall convincingly show that Christianity is never justified in seeking pioneers or allies from the seat of the scornful; it will find its true supporters, not among those to whom human misery is a jest, but among those who mourn and weep. The voice that prepares the way of the Lord comes from the desert of conflict, not from the festal halls where wine-bibbers hold their impious revelry.

Lucian was born at Samosata, in Syria, in the year 137 after Christ. His long career lasted till the commencement of the following century, and he thus witnessed the action of the two-fold impulse, which on the one hand attracted the minds of men to the religion of the future, and, on the other, led them back to the worst superstitions of the past. He travelled so much both in the East and West, that he had opportunities of observing all the eccentricities of his generation. No man was better acquainted than Lucian with the age in which he lived—if indeed that can be truly called acquaintance with the age, which consisted in seeing only its ridiculous or scandalous side, and ignoring all its deeper and higher impulses. Gifted with a quick and biting wit, saved from the prejudicial influence of the rhetoricians by his genius for satire, and raised above vulgarity by the elegance and polish of his style, Lucian knew how to give artistic value even to the wildest licence of his impure imagination. He chose in his Lucius, in his Dialogues of Courtesans, and in his Dialogue of the Loves, to grovel in the vilest mire of paganism. An avowed Epicurean, ignoring every notion of morality, desirous solely to please and to amuse, he took delight in

drawing those licentious pictures, which are read with avidity in times of moral turpitude. These infamous pages occupy in literature the place which certain frescoes from Pompeii occupy in art; they are the emblazoned advertisements of sin and degradation. This vein of impurity, running through all the writings of Lucian, does not suffice, unhappily, to impart to them a marked originality of character, for it is to be traced in almost all the writers of the Decline. That by which he is mainly distinguished is what may be called his universal impiety, his contempt of all greatness, goodness, or glory. He was the most accomplished disciple of the *nil admirari* school. If we except a few thoughtful and sensible pages on the manner of writing history, in which he argues very ingeniously against the oratorical style, and represents the office of history to be simply that of a polished and brilliant mirror, reflecting objective facts—a theory eloquently developed by an illustrious writer of our day; if we except, again, some elevated views of a sound philosophy, in the Dialogue of Hermotinus,* the whole of Lucian's works appear as one continuous and cruel strain of mockery, charming and sparkling enough when directed at follies and absurdities which deserve to be ridiculed, but unjust and calumnious, when aimed at other subjects, and in all cases alike the expression of a malicious and ungenerous spirit. When he flings his merciless jests at the rhetoricians—those traders in words who sell only adulterated food, tricked out with much spicery; when he denounces, in his Alexander, the rogueries of the

* M. Talbot, page 7 of his Introduction to Lucian, appears to us to attach too great importance to these words.

magicians, and betrays some of the impositions of their allies, the priests, one cannot but approve. His ruling ambition, however, is not to be a clever comedist and an acute critic; his great aim is, we repeat, to subvert all greatness, human or divine; it is to sap or sully all admiration; it is to destroy with the idol, every thought of the divine, to overthrow with superstition, all faith in a higher world, to annihilate philosophy no less than sophistry. The true object of his hatred is the ideal—everything that lies beyond the realities of earth, everything that stirs the soul of man, everything that makes him feel after and seek anything but pleasure, everything that breaks in upon the voluptuous revelry of the senses, the highest life of the Epicurean. His attacks upon paganism are animated by the same spirit. He has a two-bladed sword: with the one blade he strikes at superstition; the other he plunges deep into the noblest fibres of the heart. Lucian's work may be compared to the immortal poem of Dante, for its breadth and variety of subject; it is a gigantic comedy embracing three worlds; but there is nothing divine in it, and it rings only with bitter and insulting laughter. It is not Virgil, the poet of sacred sorrow, who acts as guide to the implacable scorner, as to the great Florentine; it is Diogenes, or Menippus the cynic, whose envenomed tooth fastens on all that has been held worthy of honour, adoration, and respect, in earth and heaven. Let us rapidly follow his footsteps through the circles of the pagan world; we shall then comprehend the judgment passed by such a man upon Christianity.

The Dialogues of the Dead are devoted to a review

of all the glories of ancient Greece. The heroes of fable, as well as the princes of fame, pass successively before the cynic, and not one escapes the brand. Achilles, Ajax, Agamemnon, are shorn of their vaunted valour. Alexander is dragged to the gemoniæ. Poetic and historic greatness are alike made victims. Lucian finds a keen delight in rending the shining veils of Homeric poetry, which enveloped the heroic and fabulous commencement of the history of Greece, as the empurpled clouds enshroud the landscape at the dawning. Lucian dispels with a breath all these visions of enchantment. "Know," says Euphorbus, the old Trojan hero, when speaking of the grand epopee of Homer,—"know that there was nothing in reality so marvellous. Ajax was not so great, nor Helen so beautiful, as you have been led to think."* In one of his cleverest dialogues, a man named Mycellus, transformed into a cock, rouses an unfortunate sleeper from the most delicious dream by his piercing cries: such is the part played by Lucian with regard to Greece, which had so long been held under a poetic spell by the legends of its heroic age. The words which the satirist puts into the mouth of the poor awakened dreamer apply perfectly to himself. "Bird of ill-omen, with the sharp shrill voice," exclaims the sleeper, "thou hast awaked me out of a dream of bliss. May Jupiter confound thee!"† Jupiter has too much to do to ward off the darts of raillery aimed at himself, to think of confounding any offender whatsoever. The heroes are treated with moderation

* Ἐγὼ δὲ τοσοῦτον σοὶ φήμι ὑπερφύες μηδὲν γενέσθαι τοτέ. (Lucian, Didot Edit., 498.)

† Ibid., 491.

compared with the deities. In the Dialogues upon the gods they are depicted in the most grotesque colours. At one time we are made spectators of a domestic quarrel between Juno and Jupiter; the latter appears as an old libertine, irritable and weak, the sport of the vilest passions. Venus is made to reproach Cupid with all his irreverences towards the father of the gods, and asks how he could dare to instigate Jupiter to the most shameless actions, the most degrading metamorphoses. Has not the great god been seen to assume, in turn, the horns of the bull and the wings of the swan or of the eagle? Has he not even been known to transform himself into a shower of gold? Esculapius and Hercules fight like two gladiators in their cups, and Olympus displays all the allurements of a resort of doubtful fame. The vein of satire which runs through all Lucian's treatment of the gods, is especially manifest in two dialogues, entitled the Tragic Jupiter and Jupiter Confounded. The former is his master-piece. We give a rapid analysis of it, because it shows so admirably what was the spirit in which its author assailed the ancient beliefs of his country.

A dispute is supposed to have arisen at Athens about the gods. Their cause is to be solemnly pleaded before the whole people. Hence there is a lively stir in Olympus. Jupiter is in great alarm, for the advocate to whom is confided the cause of the gods is none of the strongest, and on the success of his pleading depends the support of the immortals, who, if he fails, may find a dearth of incense and fat things. Jupiter makes bitter lamentation, and in the excess of his terror, speaks in verse like a tragic actor. Juno,

who sees him in extreme agitation, says to him sharply, "I perceive, father, that thou hast some new love in thy head." Jupiter puts her to silence by uttering these significant words: "The affairs of the gods are at the worst."* The discussion between the Stoic Timocles and the Epicurean Damis, is fraught with terrible danger for Olympus. What can be done in self-defence? The general council of the gods is convoked. They assemble tumultuously, clamouring for nectar and ambrosia.† Jupiter explains the state of the case. Strange to say, the Epicurean finds an unexpected ally in Olympus. Momus, his worthy patron, declares that he shares the ideas of Damis. He reproaches the gods with their heedlessness in leaving good men in misfortune, while the wicked triumph. "Let us own," he says, "that we give attention only when it is to be ascertained whether sacrifices have been made to us or not."‡ The other gods speak in their turn. Neptune uses the language of brute force. "I think," he says, "that we must make an end of this Damis."§ Was not this the great argument of the age—that which paganism perpetually opposed to the new religion? Thunder, water, any means is good in the eyes of the sea-god to enforce this conclusive logic; it is an expeditious method of disposing of unpleasant controversies. "Thy counsel savours of the tunny," Jupiter replies, and addresses to Neptune this remarkable observation: "It is a base idea to

* *Ἐν ἐσχάτοις τὰ θεῶν πράγματα.* (Lucian, Didot Edit., 474.)

† *Ποῦ αἱ ἑκατόμβαι.* (Ibid., 477.)

‡ *Τὰ δ' ἄλλα κατὰ ῥοῦν φέρεται ὡς ἄν τύχῃ.* (Ibid., 481.)

§ *Φημὶ δεῖν τὸν Δᾶμιν τοῦτον ἐκποδὼν ποιήσασθαι.* (Ibid.)

exterminate an adversary before the fight, for he dies without being vanquished, leaving the quarrel uncertain and pending still."* The pagan world had done well to bear in mind this excellent maxim in its conduct towards the Christians. Apollo speaks in his turn, and sorrowfully admits that the advocate of the gods does not know how to express himself with clearness; upon which Minos rallies him without mercy, as being himself the god of ambiguous oracles. Hercules proposes nothing less than to hurl down in fragments on the head of the philosopher who thus troubles them, the portico under which the discussion takes place. Jupiter observes that the proposed method is too plebeian.

The gods, having come to an end of their expedients, are constrained to lend an ear to the dispute which is just commencing with great warmth. Jupiter advises his counsel to multiply injurious epithets. "Thy strength is in slanders," he whispers.† This kind of apology has been only too keenly relished in every age. The advocate of the gods, embarrassed by the objections urged by his opponents against divine providence, appeals at once to brute force. "What!" he exclaims to his hearers, "you endure such words as these, and do not stone the wretch?"‡ Damis objects very aptly that to the gods must be left the charge of avenging themselves. The discussion on providence is prolonged, but goes more and more against the champion

* Καὶ κομιδῇ παχὺ προαναιρεῖν τὸν ἀνταγωνιστὴν, ὡς ἀποθάνῃ ἀήττητος, ἀμφήριστον ἔτι καὶ ἀδιάκριτον καταλιπὼν τὸν λόγον. (Lucian, Didot Edit., 481.)

† Ibid., 485.

‡ Ταῦτα ἀκούοντες ἀνέχεσθε καὶ οὐ καταλεύσετε τὸν ἀλιτηρίον. (Ibid.)

of Olympus. In vain he appeals to the order subsisting in the world; the Epicurean replies that there is no evidence whatever that this is an order established by the gods; the common consent of the nations to such a doctrine proves nothing, for their religious ideas are full of contradictions: oxen, monkeys, and cats have as many worshippers as the Olympic deities. He must be a fool indeed who would trust to such lying oracles, and deem them the utterance of the voice of the gods. The believer asks the sceptic if he has ever seen a ship sailing over seas without a pilot? Damis replies that never was ship with a pilot so badly steered as the accursed galley in which they were embarked. Interspersed through all these polemics are the sarcasms of Momus. The gods comfort themselves by expressing the hope that this unpleasant colloquy will not be heard of beyond the bounds of Attica. But Jupiter shakes his old head in sore chagrin. "I would rather," he says, "have one defender like Damis, than six hundred orthodox Babylonians."

In this dialogue, Lucian aims a blow not only at pagan superstitions, but at that which is the basis of all religion,—providence and divine justice; beneath the unhealthy excrescence, his lancet touches the very centre of the life. The dialogue entitled "Jupiter Confounded," presents similar features; it is religion in itself, rather than this or that religious form, which the cold-blooded sceptic endeavours to destroy. Here the debate is not carried on simply between two philosophers; Jupiter comes himself into direct issue with a cynical philosopher. The philosopher asks if it is true that necessity is above him, the great god, and that he

is compelled to acknowledge the power of the Fates? The majestic Olympian is obliged to reply in the affirmative. The cynic boldly concludes from this, that men must be very mad to offer lavish sacrifices to gods who are no gods.* The Fates alone ought to be worshipped, since they are the great sovereigns of the world. Jupiter objects that sacrifices ought to be offered in gratitude to the gods. The philosopher asks what is the ground for gratitude? How are we indebted for happiness to gods who cannot bestow it on themselves? Does not everything happen by destiny? Are the gods aught else than the docile ministers of fate? Jupiter, finding himself in a difficulty, calls down his thunders upon his adversary, who rejoices with a smile that those very thunders are not at the god's own disposal, and that he cannot cause them to descend without the permission of the Fates. He concludes by jeering at the notion of future punishments. What justice is there in chastising crimes irresponsibly committed? "Minos," he says, "ought not to punish any, for we men do nothing of our own volition; we are subject to the laws of an inevitable necessity. If any one commits a murder, it is destiny which commits it; if sacrilege, man does but what he must; hence it follows that if Minos will judge equitably, he should punish destiny instead of Sisyphus, and the fates in lieu of Tantalus. What wrong, in truth, have these men done? They have but obeyed orders." The logic of Lucian is irreproachable; the dogma of fatalism was at the foundation of Hellenic paganism, and the old

* Εἰ πάντων αἱ Μοῖραι κρατοῦσι, τίνος ἕνεκα ὑμῖν οἱ ἄνθρωποι θύομεν. (Lucian. Didot Edit., 469.)

Egyptian sphynx lay hidden behind the altar of the gods of humanism. Only for a long time, by a happy breach of logic, the Greek genius had rebelled against this crushing dogma of necessity—the bequest of the East to the West. Conscience had lifted up its voice, moral freedom had asserted itself, and a purer religious ideal had arisen. In the time of Lucian this was no longer the case. Greece, in her decrepitude, was returning to the bondage of her infancy; she was bowing her neck again beneath the yoke of fatalism, inseparable from natural religions. Lucian did not fail to turn this fatal dogma to the account of irreligion and impiety, and he presents it without any counterpoise; he pushes it to its farthest consequences, and proclaims the irresponsibility of man. With the freedom of the soul, he overturns the foundation-stone on which all moral and religious faith must rest.

Philosophy provoked his ridicule no less than religion. Here again it is not so much any special system which he attacks, as that lofty aspiration of the human soul, which struggled for expression in all the schools. He jeers at philosophy in itself, that is, at the desire and research after the highest truths. If he had contented himself with ridiculing the inconsistent philosophers of that age, he would have done nothing to call for reproach. It is the privilege of a writer of satire to expose the weaknesses of men who grossly belie their teaching by their conduct; like the philosopher represented in Timon of Athens, who preaches sobriety in the midst of an orgy, and who is carried to bed by those whom he has catechised and is still catechising

in his drunken state. The portrait drawn of this false philosopher is full of truth and humour. "Behold," he says, "the man of sober attire, of modest bearing, who wears his wisdom on his sleeve. Listen to him in the morning. How full the stream of his eulogiums on virtue, his invectives against laxity of morals! But see him just returned from the baths, and seated at the festal board, see him when he has drunk from the brimming cup which a slave hands to him, and you would say he must have imbibed a draught of the waters of Lethe, so rapid is the change. He does now all that in the morning he condemned. He seizes like a bird of prey upon the viands, feasting himself alone; he greedily serves himself from the dishes placed before his neighbours, and, chin deep in sauce, he devours like a dog. He bends over the cups as eagerly as if he were seeking virtue therein.* He is careful to leave nothing that can be eaten. When he has drunk deep, and his tongue is loosed by the quick pulses of the wine, his morning prelections on sobriety come back to his memory, and he repeats them with a thick and vinous utterance. At length he is carried from the table, clinging with both hands to the fair performer on the flute. Who can contest with him the palm of falsehood, audacity, and avarice? He is the prince of flatterers and perjurers. Falseness goes before him, impudence follows him. This, however, is the wise and perfect man, the best friend of truth!"

Lucian cannot long rest satisfied with a strain of satire so just as this, for it is not so much the *bad* philosophy

* Καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς λοπάσι τὴν ἀρετὴν εὑρήσειν προσδοκῶν. (Lucian, Didot Edit., 36.)

as the *good*, which he would fain wound mortally with his barbed arrows. His famous dialogue, the "Auction of the Philosophers," is prodigal of sarcasm upon the noblest as well as the vilest representatives of ancient philosophy. Thus to confound all systems, good or bad, is the surest method of discrediting philosophy altogether. We are introduced into a large slave-market, where Mercury proceeds, in the name of Jupiter, to the sale of various philosophers. Socrates, Epicurus, Pythagoras, Diogenes, Heraclites, Chrysippus, Pyrrho, are sold, and each tries to overcharge himself to the buyer. Lucian turns this scene of traffic into a sort of philosophical comedy, in which each system is made the subject of biting criticism. The critique on Pyrrhonism is excellent; it is the irreproachable portion of the dialogue.

Buyer. What dost thou know?

Pyrrho. Nothing.

Buyer. How so?

Pyrrho. Because nothing seems to me to have a real existence.

Buyer. Are we nothing, then?

Pyrrho. I cannot say.

Buyer. Thou knowest not if thou art aught or naught?

Pyrrho. That less than aught else do I know.

Buyer. O everlasting doubter! but of what use this balancing of things?

Pyrrho. I compare the various reasons of things; I weigh them, balance them, and when the two scales are equal, I am of course unable to decide.

Buyer. What is the end of thy science?

Pyrrho. To know nothing, to listen to nothing, to see nothing.*

The purchaser, after concluding his bargain, puts to Pyrrho this question: "Art thou sure that I have bought thee?"

Pyrrho. That is not clear.†

Buyer. How, then? I paid down the money.

Pyrrho. I withhold my opinion. Still, I doubt.

Lucian perpetually contrasts the common sense of the unlettered multitude, with the metaphysical notions which are in contradiction with it, whether by their subtlety, or by their unnatural elevation. Metempsychosis, Plato's theory of ideas, the imperturbable serenity of the Stoic,—all are in turn the subjects of his satire. The bad spirit in which this dialogue is conceived is especially manifest in the part devoted to Socrates.

Mercury. Who buys this pearl?

Buyer. What is thy best quality?

Socrates. I love children.

Buyer. How mayst thou be bought? I want a pedagogue for a fine child.

Socrates. For that I have no equal. It is not with the bodies, but with the souls I am in love.

Buyer. Thou speakest things incredible.

Socrates. I swear it by the dog and the plane-tree.

Buyer. By Hercules! thou dost call on strange gods!

Socrates. They are gods, however.

Buyer. Thou art right; but how camest thou to know them?

* Ἡ ἀμαθια, καὶ τὸ μήτε ἀκούειν μήτε ὁρᾶν. (Lucian, Didot Edit., 153.)

† Ἄδηλον.

Socrates. I dwell in a city which I have formed for myself, in a new republic to which I have given the laws.

Buyer. Cite me one of these laws.

Socrates. Hear what I have decreed about women: they are common to all.

Buyer. What is the epitome of thy life?

Socrates. Ideas are the forms and exemplars of things. All that thou seest,—the earth, the sea,—has its supersensible and invisible idea.

Buyer. Where are these ideas?

Socrates. Nowhere, for if they were anywhere, they would cease to be.

By such ridiculous traits does he characterise the greatest school of antiquity; its illustrious head is dragged down into the mire, and the worst calumnies of his murderers are accepted and complacently enlarged upon. All the philosophers are sold for an insignificant sum. One alone is purchased at a reasonable price, this is Pythagoras. The reason for this is not to be sought in his boasted austerity, in the purity of his manners, in the elevation of his doctrines. No; the scale rises for him, because it has been discovered that he has (so runs the legend) a golden thigh. Could any stronger expression of contempt for the wisdom of the ancients be devised? We may be always sure of this, that hatred and scorn of philosophy are fatal moral symptoms, since they denote complete obliviousness of a higher and divine world, and lead to an abject materialism. So far from being favourable to Christianity, as has been sometimes thought, such a disposition deprives it of its surest ground of appeal

in the human spirit. The attitude of Lucian with regard to the new religion gives sufficient evidence of this.*

We have already observed that Lucian is distinguished from other writers of his time who did battle with the Church, by a comparative moderation, which has more in it of scorn than of indulgence. The great soul of Tacitus, passionately attached to the old Roman fatherland, saw in Christianity only an impious innovation, tending to sap the foundations of a social order, which was the more deeply regretted in contrast with the hated present. Lucian was too indifferent to the destinies of his country to share such feelings, and he was too far removed from Christian spirituality, to enter into conflict with it as a rival sect. He regarded Christianity as only one of the extravagant manifestations of that craving for some new thing, which gave his contemporaries no rest, and made them the ready followers of any religious impostor. His treatise on Alexander, the false prophet, was destined to unmask the cunning practices of oriental magic, and to show in their true colours, the gross frauds of those daring magicians who imposed so largely on public credulity. From pagan superstition he passes, in his "Peregrinus," to Christian superstition.

"Peregrinus" cannot be regarded as a simple narrative. If it is certain that the hero of the adventure narrated by Lucian had a real existence, it is no less certain that the adventure itself is an invention of the

* See an excellent article on this subject, by Planck, in "Studien und Kritik," p. 826, 1851. ("Lucian und das Christenthum.") See also Baur, "Das Christenthum der drei ersten Jahrhundert.," 396-402.

satirist, who is seeking to cast ridicule on the courageous death of the Christian confessors.* Lucian must have met with more than one heroic witness for Christ in his many travels. He had passed a considerable time in Asia Minor, and had been a witness of the facts reported to Trajan by Pliny. He must have possessed also some acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, as is shown by many passages of his writings.† The colours for a farcical picture of the new religion were therefore already mixed on his palette.

Let us give a rapid sketch of this curious composition, that we may estimate the character of the polemics of Lucian. Peregrinus, a man sunk in debauchery and

* Aulu-Gelle thus speaks of Peregrinus : "Cui postea cognomentum Proteus factum est, virum gravem atque constantem. Multa, hercle, dicere eum utiliter et honeste audivimus. ("Noct. attic. Epitome," VIII. iii.) He does not say a word of his suicide. The other writers who speak of it, have evidently derived their information from Lucian. (See Planck, 836-843). Lucian himself, in other works, speaks with great moderation of Peregrinus. Thus in the "Dialogue of the Fugitives," Jupiter acknowledges that Peregrinus did not merit death, and that he was after all a brave man (*καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ἴσως*). It is, therefore, evident that Lucian has so metamorphosed the facts of the true story, as to make his Peregrinus a fictitious personage. His narrative contains also many traits indicative of a fictitious recital ; such as the extreme length of the speeches, the rapid advancement of Peregrinus from one office to another in the Church, and the strange course pursued towards him.

† In the "Philopseudos," x., wonderful cures effected by the invocation of a sacred name are related. In chap. xi., the healed man carries his bed away with him, as in Matt. ix. and Mark ii. In chap. xiii., mention is made of a man who walks upon the waters. In chap. xvi., there is the healing of a demoniac, which recalls many features of the evangelical narrative. In the "Veræ Historiæ," II. ii., the description of the capital of the Isle of the Blessed reminds us of that of the heavenly Jerusalem in Rev. xxi. (See Planck, article quoted, 886.)

stained with every crime, strangles his own father, and then becomes a wanderer and a fugitive from place to place. At length he arrives in Palestine, where he comes in contact with the Christians. He rapidly obtains credit among them, and is promoted to the highest offices in the Church. Cast into prison for his connection with a proscribed religion, he is loaded with tokens of affectionate enthusiasm by his new brethren. He receives their visits and their presents. Hardly escaped from prison, he recommences his travels and his course of infamy. From a Christian he becomes a cynic, and his stay in Italy is signalised by gross outrages offered by him to the emperor. He concludes his vile career by causing a funeral pile to be reared for himself at Elis, which is to be the pedestal of his glory, for he ascends it in great pomp before the whole of Greece assembled for the public games.

Such is a general outline of Lucian's derisive treatment of Christianity. If we examine in detail the passages in which he depicts the adherents of the new religion, we find a singular combination of impartiality and injustice. The facts themselves are not distorted, except in the final scene; they are wrongly interpreted rather than misrepresented. Thus we find no trace in the writings of Lucian, of the atrocious calumnies circulated in his time about the secret worship of the Christians. All that phantasmagoria of the popular imagination which caused so much bloodshed, exerts no influence over his mind. He coolly narrates what he has witnessed, without any addition except occasional satirical remarks. Thus he involuntarily renders the highest testimony to the sect which he seeks to

decry. Others will see the true greatness in that which seems to him simple madness; the tribute which he renders to the tenderest Christian virtues, is of so much the more value because it is so unwittingly paid. In truth, all the accusations brought by Lucian against the Christians, may be traced back to one comprehensive charge—their credulity. This was the intolerable offence to an Epicurean like Lucian. The Christians are men of faith, while he is a man of sight; between him and them there is all the distance which divides the most exalted spirituality from the most abject materialism, hemmed in by the narrow range of the visible, and never seeking to rise above it. "These miserable men," he says, "have persuaded themselves that they are immortal and will live for ever.* This blind credulity, which leads them to believe in another life, has made them the victims of the strangest imposture. The Founder of their religion is an obscure sophist, who was crucified in Palestine for having introduced a strange worship into Judæa. They adore this crucified malefactor, and for the faith of Him have forsaken the brilliant religion of the Greeks, and embraced a new superstition."† There would have been something wanting to the glory of Christ, if any other judgment than this had been passed upon Him by such a man as Lucian. He goes on to say that the Christians, not content with thus placing their confidence in this first impostor, bestow it with equal readiness upon any one who attempts to lead them away. "If there comes among

* Πεπείκασι γὰρ αὐτοὺς οἱ κακοδαίμονες τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἀθάνατοι ἔσεσθαι. ("Peregrinus," xiii.; Lucian, "Opera," 69.)

† Τὸν δὲ ἀνεσκολοπίσμένον σοφιστὴν αὐτῶν προσκυνοῦσι. (Ibid.)

them an impostor, a crafty rogue, he can at once enrich himself by trading on their credulity, while he laughs in his sleeve at their simpleness." In this way Peregrinus made his fortune. Lucian represents him as a second Christ; his authority over his new brethren at once became so great that they considered themselves mere children beside him. "He was by turns prophet, introducer of mysteries, head of the assembly; he interpreted their sacred books and wrote others, so that many regarded him as a god, a legislator and high-priest equal to the crucified one."* Peregrinus thus serves a double purpose; Christ and His worshippers are both made the objects of ridicule in his person. The imprisonment of the impostor gives occasion for a fresh display of satirical power in the writer. Lucian represents the Christians as feeling themselves wounded in the person of Peregrinus, and putting forth every effort for his deliverance. "From early morning a crowd of old women, widows and orphans, was gathered around the prison.† The principal persons of the sect passed the night with him, having bribed the gaolers with money; they had all sorts of viands brought to them in the prison, and read their sacred books. Clearly that which Lucian here describes is one

* Καὶ τι γὰρ; ἐν βραχεῖ παῖδας αὐτοὺς ἀπέφηνε προφήτης καὶ θιασάρχης καὶ ξυναγωγεὺς καὶ πάντα μόνος αὐτὸς ὢν καὶ τῶν βίβλων τὰς μὲν ἐξηγεῖτο καὶ διεσάφει, πολλὰς δέ αὐτὸς καὶ ξυνέγραφε καὶ ὡς θεὸν αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνοι ἡγοῦντο καὶ νομοθέτη ἐχρῶντο καὶ προστάτην ἐπέγραφον. τὸν μέγαν γοῦν ἐκεῖνον ἔτι σέβουσι, τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἐν τῇ Παλαιστινῇ ἀνασκολοπισθέντα, ὅτι καινὴν ταύτην τελετὴν εἰσήγαγεν ἐς τὸν βίον. ("Peregrinus," xxxi.; Lucian, "Opera," 691.)

† Ἡ γε ἄλλη θεραπεία πᾶσα σὺν σπουδῇ ἐγίγνετο καὶ ἔωθεν μὲν ἐνθὺς ἦν ὁρᾷν παρὰ τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ περιμένοντα γρᾴδια χήρας τινὰς καὶ παιδία ὀρφανά. (Ibid., xii.)

of those sublime *Agapæ*, secretly celebrated by the confessors in the darkness of their dungeons, during the times of persecution. The fact that the Christian religion was of so compassionate a nature that it attracted to itself the suffering and sorrowful, widows and orphans, and that under its influence even an obscure prison-cell could be transformed into a sanctuary of Christian love, only moved the scorn of the cynic. He passes by this spectacle of tender human charity with a sneering toss of the head, as he had already passed by the exhibition of Divine charity on the cross; but he has drawn to it none the less the admiring gaze of after ages. "Nor is this all," he adds. "Several cities of Asia sent deputies to Peregrinus in the name of the Christians, to render him service as helpers, advocates, and comforters. No words can describe the eagerness to aid, which they display under such circumstances; to say all, in one word, they count no cost. Large sums of money thus found their way to Peregrinus." This passage gives emphatic witness not only to the charity exercised towards each other by members of the same Church, but also to the close bond of holy union, which subsisted among the Christians of every land. It affords a beautiful practical illustration of the words of the apostle: "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with him." The man of the world could form no conception of such a bond, and this grand catholicity of the Christian brotherhood only moved him to sardonic mirth. "Their first legislator," he says, with a sneer, "has persuaded them that they are all brethren.* They sell their goods, and have all

* Ὡς ἀδελφοὶ πάντες εἶεν. ("Peregrinus," xiii.)

things in common, so entirely do they rely on His words. Christian brotherhood lies beyond the range of Epicurean vision; to the man who lives only for himself, disinterested love must seem the height of folly. The greater the self-devotion, the more irrational does it appear in his eyes. Martyrdom is the climax of unreason in Lucian's view, and he makes it the mark for his sharpest arrows of sarcasm. All the latter part of "Peregrinus" is a parody of the tortures of the Christians. Some have disputed the correctness of this interpretation, because Peregrinus, on coming out of prison, attaches himself to the sect of the cynics; but if it is borne in mind that Lucian regards Christianity less as a special sect than as one of many curious manifestations of the religious malady of the time—a malady which seems to him common to all schools but his own —it will be seen that it was a matter of indifference to him whether his attacks fell upon the Christians or the cynics. In truth, he aims a blow at both sects at once, and confounds the holiness of the one with the false austerity of the other. It is of small consequence, then, that Peregrinus passes from the school of Christ to that of Diogenes; in Lucian's estimation he is still pursuing the same course. Beside, it was perfectly simple to suppose in an age of universal eclecticism, the fusion of two systems in the same individual. If Lucian makes Peregrinus speak and act as a cynic, he makes him die as a Christian. Possibly it is with a view to offering the more unrestrained insults to him as a Christian, that he turns him into a cynic. Not believing in the vile calumnies cast upon the Church by the ignorant masses, he would not have dared so completely

to blacken one of the representatives of the new religion, if he had not first wrapped him in the soiled and tattered mantle of Diogenes. Here again we have what may be regarded as a fresh and indirect tribute to Christianity. It is impossible also not to recognise in the death of Peregrinus, a facetious skit on two martyrs with whom Lucian had certainly had some acquaintance in Asia Minor; many features in his narrative recall the deaths of Ignatius and Polycarp. The deputations sent from the Churches to Peregrinus, his ardent impatience for death, bring to mind the glowing letters of the Bishop of Antioch; the scene of the fiery pile of Elis, and the eagerness of the friends of the deceased to gather up his ashes, are clearly but a travesty of the acts of the martyrdom of the Bishop of Smyrna. We may observe, in conclusion, that in the former part of his work, Lucian especially mentions the contempt of suffering, leading men to surrender themselves voluntarily to death, as one of the most unaccountable caprices of the Christians. But is not this precisely the case of Peregrinus? his death can be regarded, then, as nothing else than a caricature of martyrdom. This comes out beyond a doubt from an examination of the details. The funeral pile has been erected at a distance of twenty stadia from Olympia. Scarcely has the moon risen, when Peregrinus advances in his ordinary attire, and surrounded by the chief men of his sect, just as the Christian confessors were followed by their brethren to the threshold of the arena. He lays down his wallet and burns some incense, and then he disappears in the flames. His adherents, gathered around the fire, stand motionless, and mark their grief by solemn silence.

"I met," says the ironical narrator, "a crowd of people going to see this spectacle. They flattered themselves they should find Peregrinus still alive. . .The most part turned back when I told them the thing was done, except those who cared not so much to see the sight itself as the spot where it had taken place, and who were anxious to gather up some remains from the fire." Who can fail to recognise in this description those Christians of Smyrna, who piously collected the yet smouldering ashes of the venerable Polycarp? . . . . The same narrator goes on to say: "To please the imbeciles, ever greedy after the marvellous, I added from my own invention some tragic details; for example, that at the moment when the flames caught the pile and Peregrinus cast himself into them, there was an earthquake, accompanied with a fearful rumbling sound. . ."* This last touch is a scoff not at the disciple but at the Divine Master himself, for it contains an evident allusion to the extraordinary circumstances which accompanied the death of the Saviour of the world.

The whole of Lucian's polemics against Christianity thus culminates in a parody of martyrdom. To the man whose sole care was to deck with the flowers of style, the grand maxim of materialism, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," the Christian, voluntarily choosing death rather than life, is not only the most miserable, he is the most senseless of mankind. The scene of the confessor's martyrdom is, next to the cross of Christ, the most powerful protest of the invisible against the visible, of spirit against matter, of holy love against selfish ease; in a word, of Christianity against Epicu-

* "Peregrinus," xxxvi.–xxxix. Talbot's translation.

reanism. That which was the great stone of stumbling to the Epicurean was the great strength of the Christian: attack and defence must both be concentrated on this point. The Christians could make no better reply to their scoffing adversaries than to continue to suffer and to die for the truth. Their triumph was sure, for, after all, human conscience is on the side of the devotee and not of the scoffer.

(b.) Attacks of Celsus on Christianity.

Christianity was to encounter in the ranks of eclectic philosophy an adversary, not more acute and quick-witted, but more able and implacable, than Lucian. Celsus, who lived under the Antonines,* appears to have professed a system composed of the most heterogeneous elements, since it held in combination Platonism and Epicureanism. This motley union presents nothing really astonishing in an age when the most lawless syncretism prevailed, throwing down all barriers and effacing the dividing lines of all doctrines. We shall not find in Celsus either the classic Platonist or the ordinary Epicurean. Platonism is somewhat depreciated in his system, and the Epicurean philosophy somewhat elevated. He has not the lofty spirituality of a faithful disciple of the Academy, nor the gross materialism

* Celsus cannot have written before the time of Marcus Aurelius, since he speaks of the Marcionites, a sect which only appeared in the year 142 after Christ; and of the Marcellians, Gnostics of the sect of Carpocrates, who came to Rome in the year 157. (Irenæus, "Contra Hæres.," I. xxiv.) The details which he gives of the Christians compelled to hide themselves to escape death, may refer perfectly well to the reign of Marcus Aurelius. ("Contra Celsum," VIII. 69)

of the true followers of Epicurus. It was to him that Lucian addressed his work, "Alexander, the False Prophet."* Representing Gnostic philosophy in its

* Several Church historians have refused to admit that the Celsus who wrote against Christianity was the same Celsus, the friend of Lucian, and the Epicurean of whom the great apologist speaks. ("Contra Celsum," I. 8.) They object, firstly, on the ground of the plainly Platonic principles which were at the basis of the system of Origen's adversary; they further draw attention to the fact, that the defender of Christianity speaks only with some hesitation as to the person of his opponent. They conclude from these considerations that there was more than one Celsus—an Epicurean Celsus and a Platonist of the same name. The following passage, in which Origen seems to suppose that some Celsus, other than his usual opponent, might have written against Christianity, is appealed to in support of this hypothesis: Εἴ γε οὗτός ἐστι καὶ ὁ κατὰ χριστιανῶν ἄλλα δύο βίβλια συνταξας. "If, at least, it is he who has written two other books against the Christians." ("Contra Celsum," IV. 36.) It is argued from this passage that Origen admitted the possible existence of a second Celsus, equally bitter against the new religion, but who attacked it from a different standpoint. It would then be easy to suppose that the great apologist had more than once attributed to the Platonist the ideas of the Epicurean, and the difficulty would disappear. But in Book VII. lxxvi., Origen speaks to his friend Ambrose of other books in which Celsus the Epicurean attacked Christianity; it follows that in the former passage he was also speaking of the disciple of Epicurus, and that he merely alluded to other writings of the same kind of which he was the author. If it is asserted that the association of a modified Platonism with a mitigated Epicureanism, in the second century after Christ, is impossible, it must be admitted that Origen was completely mistaken upon this point, for he unquestionably attributes to the same man ideas borrowed from both schools. Now, we cannot believe that a man of such high philosophical ability would have assigned to the same individual two doctrines which would have been in his time utterly irreconcilable. Since he represents Celsus as an Epicurean, it follows that the blending of a form of Platonism with a form of Epicureanism was then possible. How can any one affirm the contrary, of an age when all ideas and all religions were in a state of fusion? Who can be certain that he has exhausted all the possible combinations of this universal syncretism? Besides, Celsus had selected the oriental and pantheistic aspect

most glorious tradition and in its most popular school, he repudiated all that was of foreign extraction, both the magic of Asia, against which he had himself written several books, and the new doctrine sprung from Judæa.

The cross was, in a twofold aspect, folly to such a man. In the first place, it rendered valueless all the subtle and brilliant dialectics which were the pride of the Platonists, requiring alike from learned and unlearned, the faith of a little child; and, secondly, it demanded of the Epicurean, the man of pleasure, self-denial and devotion, even unto death, to the cause of Christ. It was as severe upon the mere gratification of the intellect as of the senses. Such a religion must, at any cost, be shorn of the prestige it had gained; it must be branded afresh with the ignominy of its origin, and made once more a post of infamy, upon which dangerous innovators deserved to be crucified like their Master before them. This was the pious task to which Celsus devoted himself. His book, which he entitled "The Words of Truth,"* is a masterpiece of able and impassioned argument; so far at least as we can judge from the fragments handed down to us by Origen.† The keen instinct of hatred

of Platonism, which could very well be combined with Epicureanism. The philosopher who placed man lower in the scale than the brute was a very lax disciple of Plato. We hold, then, to the hypothesis of Origen, which still seems to us the most plausible. (See the discussion of this point in Neander, "Church History," I. 169, and in Baur, "Geschichte der drei erst. Jahrhund.," 371.) Both historians draw a conclusion, the opposite of our own.

* Ἀληθὴς λόγος.

† These fragments we find scattered throughout Origen's great Apology. Baur has analysed them with his habitual acuteness. (Work quoted, p. 371 and following.)

gave him remarkable clear-sightedness; he at once discerned the points of attack most favourable for the assailant. He collected in his quiver all the objections possible to be made, and there is scarcely one missing of all the arrows which in subsequent times have been aimed against the supernatural in Christianity. Detailed discussion of texts, broad philosophical theories, piquant sarcasm, eloquent invective,—all are appliances at his command. Nor does he scruple to have recourse to the bad faith which wrests and falsely colours facts, and reconstructs history according to the requirements of party polemics.* To render his task more easy, he purposely confounds Christian doctrine with the heresies in which its principles were misrepresented.† The contest is never allowed to flag; Celsus does not attempt to preserve the attitude of an impartial judge, his hatred makes this impossible: again and again we find him breaking the thread of a dispassionate discussion of exegesis, to make in the most direct manner passionate appeals to Christ Himself. This uncontrollable vehemence accounts for the absence of method by which his work is characterised.‡ He did not allow himself time to form his accusations into a logical chain; they struggled for utterance like long-imprisoned waters; and as Origen has well said,

* Origen gives us a striking instance of this distortion of facts. ("Contra Celsum," II. xxiv.) Celsus, when ridiculing the agony of Christ in the garden, carefully avoids citing those words of sublime obedience which mingled with his groans. He frequently thus mutilates texts. (See I. 63; II. 34.)

† "Contra Celsum," VI. 24.

‡ Πολλὰ εὔρυς συγκεχυμένως τῷ Κέλσῳ εἰρημένα δι' ὅλης βιβλου. ("Contra Celsum," I. 40.)

hatred and wrath know no law. This lawlessness and confusion were, however, only on the surface; beneath there was a severe logic in the polemics of Celsus. Desiring to make his book a vast repertory of all the assaults upon the new religion, he does not rest satisfied with the objections amply supplied to him by his own philosophical point of view; he is well aware that Judaism is the foremost foe of Christianity alike in date and in rank: he knows that no hostility will ever surpass that of the synagogue towards a creed which it regards as a vile apostasy. The coalition of Pilate and Herod is renewed in the work of Celsus; only, in the place of a worn-out sceptic inclined to indulgence, we have an evil philosopher full of spleen; in the place of an ambitious king, who has sold himself to the alien, we have a fantastic scribe. Christ is brought into the presence of a sophist and a rabbi, into the presence, that is, of the two schools which have always been most bitterly hostile to Him.

Celsus commences by bringing accusations against the Gospel from the standpoint of a degenerate Judaism. He assumes the mask of a Jew, to use Origen's expression,* and plays his part with much skill. He postpones, till the occasion comes for speaking in his own name, the discussion of the principles of monotheism. He admits for the moment that which he will presently deny; he first makes use of the Jew, to rid himself of the Christians, and when this is accomplished, he will turn upon the Jew, and in him strike a blow at theism, which is to him the

* *Ἐγκαλεῖ τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὁ Κέλσος δία τοῦ ἰουδαϊκοῦ προσωπου.* ("Contra Celsum," II. 41.)

abhorrent basis of both the religions of the Bible. Celsus, with true judgment, does not put into the mouth of the defender of Judaism the keen and close arguments, or broad erudition of a Greek philosopher; he uses the Jew as the type of that unintelligent conservatism which makes the mind a petrifaction of the past. His scribe reproaches the Christians with allowing themselves to be absurdly deceived by Jesus, and with having forsaken the religion of their fathers by changing their name and mode of life.* Well versed in the holy books, as became a doctor of the law, the Jew set forth by Celsus enters into a minute discussion of texts, compares various documents, and makes them nullify each other. It is by exegesis that this objector seeks to discredit the Gospel narrative, and he spells it out as a faithful disciple of the letter which kills. Convinced that the Christians will fall slain by the sword of their own Scriptures, he perpetually wields against them the sharp two-edged blade which is to pierce them through.†

First the crafty rabbi, studiously confounding the four canonical Gospels with the apocryphal Gospels, at that time very numerous, asserts that the sacred books of the Christians had undergone numberless falsifications. "Like men," he says, "who, in a state of intoxication lay hands upon themselves, they have modified and entirely changed, three or four or even more times, the text of the Gospels, with a view to obviate objections brought against them.‡ . . . But they

* Φησὶν αὐτοὺς καταλιπόντας τὸν πατριον νόμον, καὶ ἀπηυτομοληκέναι εἰς ἄλλο ὄνομα, καὶ εἰς ἄλλον βίον. ("Contra Celsum," II. 41.)

† Αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἑαυτοῖς περιπίπτετε. (Ibid., II. 74.)

‡ Ἵν' ἔχοιεν πρὸς τοὺς ἐλέγχους ἀρνεῖσθαι. (Ibid., II. 27.)

have taken their precautions so ill that they have left still innumerable contradictions in the narratives for the authenticity of which they plead." The Jew passes in review these supposed contradictions, placing side by side the various accounts of the several Gospels. Nor is he satisfied with raising critical doubts as to the value of the documents; he constantly impugns the subject-matter itself. It is not enough for him to prove that no reliance can be placed on Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John; he pursues with his bitter sarcasms the Divine hero of the story. He carefully avoids any discussion of the prophetic oracles, to which the Christians appealed in opposition to the adherents of the synagogue, and by which in very truth they smote their antagonists with their own sword. The Jew of Celsus passes by in perfect silence, the exact declarations of the Old Testament with reference to the Messiah;* he justifies his fellow countrymen in their unbelief, and simply draws the conclusion that the Christians have wrongly interpreted the prophets. "How," he asks, "can it be explained, that we should have covered with reproach and dishonour Him whose coming we were to announce to all mankind, and whose righteous judgments we were to proclaim against the wicked?" After thus simplifying his task, he does violence to the pages of the sacred writings one after another. The two genealogies of the Gospels do not detain him long; he does not appear to have perceived all the difficulties involved in this formidable critical problem. He contents himself with giving emphasis to the contrast between a reputed origin so

* "Contra Celsum," I. 49.

glorious, and the low estate of the mother of Christ.* He seeks to degrade the Virgin of Bethlehem by making himself the echo of the vilest calumnies as to the birth of her first-born son; he does not hesitate to trace it to a guilty connection with a Roman soldier.† "This is a slander raked out of the mire of the street," justly remarks Origen.‡ The flight into Egypt strikes him as supremely ludicrous. "What need hadst Thou to flee?" he asks the infant Jesus. "Was it to escape death? But a God has no death to fear. . . . Could not the great God, who sent two angels to rescue Thee, have preserved His own Son safe and sound in Thy house?"§ This journey into foreign countries was turned to account, however, by the founder of the new religion. "Brought up secretly in Egypt, He there learned to work miracles, and was thus enabled on His return to pass Himself off as God."‖ This charge of sorcery recurs frequently in the writings of Celsus. We shall see that he presently brings it forward in his own name. "Must we believe," adds the *soi-disant* Jew, "in all the charlatans who practise enchantments, and take them to be gods?"¶ The divinity of the Saviour is the subject of the concentrated malice of the representative of the synagogue. "If it is enough to prove godhead, that a man should ascribe his birth to an intervention of Providence, then any one of us may proclaim himself a god. Such a privilege is common to all.** All

* "Contra Celsum," II. 32.

† Ἀτίμως σκότιον ἐλέννησε τὸν Ἰησοῦν. (Ibid., I. 28.)

‡ Ibid., I. 39. § Τὸν ἴδιον υἱόν. (Ibid., I. 66.)

‖ Θεὸν δὲ ἐκείνας τὰς δυνάμεις ἑαυτὸν ἀναλορεύοντα. (Ibid., I. 38.)

¶ Ibid., I. 68. ** Ibid., I. 57.

nations have had their apotheoses; the only difference between the Christian doctrine and other religions, is, that Christ has done less to deserve deification than any of the heroes of antiquity. Such beings as Minos and Amphion have rendered far greater services than He. What hast Thou done, then, so noble, so beautiful in word or deed, O Christ, though the Jews in the Temple besought Thee to show a sign of Thy divinity?"*

After discussing the principal facts of the Gospel history, the scribe expends his most bitter irony on the account of the Passion. The sponge dipped in vinegar is truly held by his hand a second time in bitter scorn to the Christ on the cross. First of all, Christ could not have announced His coming death to His disciples; for if He had foreseen, He would have evaded it. "Where is the God, where is the genius, where is the prudent man, who, foreseeing a calamity, would not use every endeavour to escape it if he could, but would rush into it headlong?"† Such an objection is full of force to a man who regards all self-devotion as simple folly. "If a God had predicted these things," resumes the Jew, "it was necessary that they should be accomplished. This God, then, constrained His own disciples, with whom He ate and drank, to trample on every notion of justice and right. He ought surely to have shown most of all to His own, that good-will which He testified to all. Was a true man ever known to lay an ambush for those with whom

* Σὺ δὴ τί καλὸν ἢ θαυμάσιον ἔργῳ ἢ λόγῳ πεποίηκας; ("Contra Celsum," I. 68.

† Τίς ἂν θεὸς, ἢ δαίμων, ἢ ἄνθρωπος φρόνιμος συνέπιπτεν οἷς προσεπίστατο; (Ibid., II. 19.)

he lived in intimacy? Yet this is what was done by this God; and, what is more absurd, He laid snares for His friends to make them traitors and impious."* Such a charge, which would be meaningless in the mouth of a pagan fatalist, was truly characteristic of the mind of a Jew, and might seem at first hard to meet. It was of especial importance because it impugned the perfect holiness of the Saviour.† The polemic shows himself equally an adept, when he endeavours to prove that the death of Jesus Christ cannot be regarded as a punishment voluntarily assumed by Him. In fact, if He died because He willed to die, He was not punished; the cross was then the crown of His desires.‡ This Jew of Celsus—the worthy scion of his forefathers, the mockers around the cross—follows the Redeemer of the world step by step along the path which led Him to Calvary, and has a jeer for each article of anguish. He enters with Him the garden of Gethsemane; with a dry eye he beholds that agony, with a heart unmoved he listens to those groans; and when he sees the Saviour prostrate in the dust and bedewing it with drops of blood, he bursts into this cruel irony: "See Him, hear Him, lamenting, weeping, crying with a loud voice to be delivered from the fear of death!"§ The Jew enacts his part consistently throughout. His

* Αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς τοῖς συντραπέζοις ἐπεβούλευσε, προδότας καὶ δυσσεβεῖς ποιῶν. ("Contra Celsum," II. 20.)

† Ἐγκαλεῖ τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὡς μὴ δειξαντι ἑαυτὸν πάντων δὴ κακῶν καταρεύοντα. (Ibid., II. 41.)

‡ Δῆλον ὅτι θεῳ ὄντι καὶ βουλομένῳ οὔτ' ἀλγεινὰ, οὔτ' ἀνιάρα ἦν τὰ κατὰ γνώμην χρώμενα. (Ibid., II. 23.)

§ Τί οὖν ποτνιᾶται καὶ ὀδύρεται; (Ibid., II. 24.)

fury is as fierce as that of his countrymen who beheld the crucifixion; the most sublime and melting scenes of the Passion have no power to disarm his bitter hatred. The spectacle of Christ dragged from one tribunal to another, draws from him only such words as these: "How can He be regarded as a God who has not kept one of His promises, and who, after being confounded by us, and sentenced to be worthy of death, sought the most obscure hiding-place, and was overtaken in the most ignominious flight?* Pilate, who condemned Him, incurred no vengeance from Him.† He had only a handful of disciples, and they forsook Him and fled. During the whole course of His ministry he had only gained over to His doctrine ten fishermen and two publicans of the lowest sort.‡ Even these He had not succeeded in attaching truly to His cause. "Those who had been with Him during His life, who had listened to His voice, who had taken Him for their master, when they saw Him suffering and dying, were not willing to meet death or suffering with Him; on the contrary, they even denied that they were His disciples."§ Briefly summing up the whole argument, Celsus exclaims through the mouth of his Jew: "Instead of the Divine Word, all purity, all holiness, the Christians set before us as the Son of God, a being worthy only of contempt, and who perished miserably on a cross."‖

* "Contra Celsum," II. 9. † Ibid., II. 34.

‡ *Δέκα ναύτας καὶ τελώνας τοὺς ἐξωλεστάτους μόνους εἵλε.* (Ibid., II. 46.)

§ *Κολαζόμενον καὶ ἀποθνήσκοντα ὁρῶντες οὔτε συναπέθανον, οὔτε ὑπεραπέθανον αὐτοῦ.* (Ibid., II. 45.)

‖ *Ἀποδείκνυμεν οὐ λόγον καθαρὸν καὶ ἅγιον, ἄλλα ἄνθρωπον, ἀτιμότατον, ἀπαχθέντα καὶ ἀποτυμπανισθέντα.* (Ibid., II. 31.)

It is plain that Celsus and his Jew were of that order of men, with whom present success is the gauge of truth. Even accepting his standpoint, the resurrection of Christ seriously admitted, would overturn the strongest objections urged against Christianity, since a crucifixion leading to such glory ceases to be a death of infamy. Therefore the Jew spares no pains to destroy the faith in this great fact, which is the basis of the apostolic preaching. He points out, in the first place, that Christ is not the only impostor who has ventured on this startling declaration, and has found many credulous followers. Pythagoras, Orpheus, Hercules, Theseus,—all these have come back from the dead, if we may credit popular legends. Why should that which we treat as an absurd fable in the history of these mythical personages, become a solemn verity when predicated of Jesus Christ? The sudden darkness, the earthquake, all the signs which in the Christian story accompanied His death—do they not clearly point to the legendary character of the narrative? "What! are we to suppose that He who could not save Himself in life, left the tomb a living man, and bearing the visible marks of death in His pierced hands?* Again: who are the witnesses of this miracle? A frenzied woman, men under the same spell of magic arts, who have dreamed the thing, or have imagined that what they desired had really happened, if indeed, which is more probable, they have not designedly sought by this falsehood to accredit their other impostures.†

* "Οτι δὴ ζῶν μὲν οὐκ ἐπήρκεσεν ἑαυτῷ, νεκρὸς δ' ἀνέστη. ("Contra Celsum," II. 55.)

† Διὰ τοιούτου ψεύσματος ἀφορμὴν ἄλλοις ἀγύρταις παρασχεῖν. (Ibid.)

If the Christ had desired to give full proof of His divinity, He should have shown Himself after His resurrection to His enemies, to His judges, to all men, in fine.* Where is He now, that we may see and believe Him? For if it is not possible for us to believe, it must be allowed that He is come to drive us into unbelief, since He was not able to convince even His own disciples."†

Celsus has skilfully manipulated the polemics of Judaism against Christianity; he has drawn all the advantage possible from it, and yet this is but the prologue to his own polemics. At length he throws off his Jewish mask to make his home thrusts. First of all he turns upon his temporary ally, and before entering into direct conflict with Christianity, he attacks Judaism without mercy, ignoring the fact that he has just now been leaning on it for support. He well knows that the two religions rest essentially upon the same foundation—upon faith in a personal God, a free Agent, and the Creator of the world. If he succeeds in subverting this basis, the Old and New Testaments will be involved in a common destruction. He cannot forget, moreover, that in spite of the declared hostility between their actual representatives, the two religions stand in close connection; the latter traces itself back to the former, it appeals to the same sacred books, and its roots lay hold of the historic past of Judaism. It is at Christianity, therefore, that Celsus is still aiming even when he attacks Judaism; this is the secret of his deadly animosity to the Jew's religion. "After all," he says, "the contest between the

* "Contra Celsum," II. 63. † Ibid., II. 77, 78.

Christians and the Jews turns upon a mere bagatelle, upon the shadow of an ass, as runs the proverb.* Both are as one on all that is essential, and are struck with the same madness. In fact, the sole difference to be discerned between them is, that the Christians hold that the Christ is already come, while the Jews are still looking for Him in the future. It is vain for the latter to pretend they are the people of God: their origin is well known; their ancestors were Egyptian rebels, expelled ignominiously from their country for attempting to introduce novelties in religion. They were the Christians of their day; they displayed the same factious spirit.† Their great prophet and lawgiver, Moses, cannot bear comparison with the early legislators of Greece, such as Linus and Orpheus. His books, which they are not allowed to interpret allegorically, miserably degrade the Deity, by making him a being of human passions.‡ As to the other prophets, their oracles are not to be named beside those of the Pythoness, by which the movements of whole nations have been swayed and guided.§ The Jews have not even been able to preserve intact the belief in one only God, for by a strange inconsistency, they associate with Him in their worship, heaven and the angels, though they refuse their homage to the shining lights, the moon and the stars, which form part of the heavens.‖ Where is their superiority over other nations? Their God is not their own, for He is but the Greek Jupiter in a lower

* Ὄνου σκιᾶς μάχη. ("Contra Celsum," III. 1.)

† Ἀμφοτέροις αἴτιον γεγονέναι τῆς καινοτομίας τὸ στασιάζειν πρὸς τὸ κοῖνον. (Ibid., III. 5.)

‡ Ibid., I. 17, 18. § Ibid., VIII. 3. ‖ Ibid., V. 6.

form. Their institutions are borrowed from other nations; circumcision they derived from Egypt. The smoking ruins of their holy city, and their dispersion among the nations, are not arguments calculated to prove them the people favoured of heaven.* If we seek a truly ancient and venerable nation that can boast of its remote origin and of its past history, we must carry our researches not into Judæa but into Chaldea."† It is not true that Celsus completely confounds Judaism with other religions; if it were so, he would not attack it with such virulence. That which so moves his hatred is the essential dogma of the Jew's religion—the principle of theism, and the doctrine that God is one, and creation a free act.

"These wretched shepherds," he says, in a passage in which he explicitly recognises the original character of the religion of the Hebrews,—"these wretched shepherds, in following their Moses, allowed themselves to be snared by mean artifices—worthy indeed of such a race—into a belief in one only God,‡ as if every part of the universe was not divine, and the whole, God."§ The account of the creation especially moved the mirth of the philosopher; it boldly confuted his Platonic ideas as to the eternity of the world, and must be got rid of at any cost.‖ This is the grand point of difference between Celsus and Christianity; all the other objections are in his eyes secondary; the great controversy is

* "Contra Celsum," V. 41. † Ibid., VI. 80.

‡ Ἀγροίκοις ἀπάταις ψυχαγωγηθέντες, ἵνα ἐνόμισαν εἶναι θεόν. (Ibid., I. 23.)

§ Τὸ μὲν ὅλον εἶναι θεὸν, τὰ δὲ μέρη αὐτοῦ μὴ θεῖα. (Ibid., V. 6.)

‖ Ibid., VI. 49, 52.

between pantheism and theism; we shall find him therefore recurring perpetually to this train of ideas.

From Judaism he passes to Christianity, and subjects it to a most close and searching inquisition. He neglects no argument that can be urged against it, availing himself equally of the coarsest calumnies of popular passion and of the most subtle dialectic methods. His plan of attack is very simple; he first pours a torrent of scorn upon the persons of the Christians, and having thus raised a mist of prejudice, rendering a calm and impartial examination impossible, he then proceeds to inquire into their doctrine. The opening of his direct attack upon the new religion is utterly dastardly and mean; he, at the outset, perfidiously declares his adversaries to be rebels, and by thus placing them beyond the protection of the law, secures to himself the last word, since he knows well that their voices will be stifled in blood, however eloquent and conclusive may be their defence. One cannot but ask, was it then worth while to enter on the discussion at all? This appeal of the philosopher to the proconsul casts discredit upon the whole of his argument, and enlists all generous minds on the side of his opponents.

The Christians are represented by Celsus as dangerous innovators, who overturn social order by breaking the unity of the empire and weakening the monarchical principle, which is its glory and strength. "If all were to follow your example," he says, "the supreme head of the government would soon be forsaken . . . For striking a blow at this great principle, you deserve

to be punished."* Continuing his course of denunciation, Celsus gives the most untrue representation of the assemblies which the Christians were compelled to hold in secret;† he compares their *Agapæ* to the dangerous associations proscribed by the law, because they harboured seditious designs. "Rebellion," he says, "is their bond of union; they hope to inspire a cowardly fear, and thus to gain an advantage for themselves."‡ The internal commotions of the empire, he declares, had become more frequent as the Christian sect had increased. Even supposing that its adherents are not movers of sedition, they are at least useless members of society, who neglect or refuse their proper duties. The philosopher ironically exhorts them to aid the prince, to share the burden of his labours for their country, to take up arms for him, to fight under his orders.§ Of what use can the Christians be, he asks, to an empire, the most venerable traditions of which they have trampled under foot? Have they not broken through all the customs of their nation? Nay, more; they have renounced the most sacred practices; they have no temples, no sacrifices, no statues of the gods.‖ "That which has been officially instituted," says this freethinker, "ought to be maintained. It is not permissible to abrogate customs which have been observed in a country from all time."¶ The Christians, furthermore, belong to no nation; they are of no country; no one knows whence they come. Their deity, be he

* "Contra Celsum," VIII. 68.

† Ὡς συνθήκας κρύβδην πρὸς ἀλλήλους ποιουμένων. (Ibid.)

‡ Ibid., III. 14. § Ibid., VIII. 73. ‖ Ibid., VII. 62; VIII. 17

¶ Παραλύειν οὐχ ὅσιον εἶναι τὰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατα τόπους νενομισμένα (Ibid., V. 25.)

who he may, has surely marked his displeasure with them, by the accumulation of their miseries. "This God, who, as you say, has promised to load His worshippers with benefits, how has He served you?* So far from making you possessors of the whole earth, He has not even left you one foot of ground, not even a hut to call your own, and if any of you are still found wandering up and down for a hiding-place, you are sought out and slain. You are the worthy disciples of a crucified master, yourselves devoted to a shameful death."† Elsewhere Celsus, who feels that after all a death courageously met does honour to the doctrine which inspires it, sets as a counterpoise to the endurance of the Christians, the condemnation and courageous end of Socrates.‡ Deeply imbued with the proud esoterism of the ancient philosophy, which communicated its secrets only to some few favoured initiates, he compassionates a sect in which all ranks are confounded, and which gathers its adherents from the vilest and lowest classes. The Christians are charlatans who, incapable of imposing on the wise and cultivated, collect the dregs of the people in the public places, and canvass for the support of the ignorant, of children, and of slaves.§ They in all points resemble those vulgar tricksters who are silent in the presence of intelligent men, but work wonders before silly women; these low impostors often lead young people to break away from the yoke of their learned instructors to come and listen to them in the gymnasium, or in the workshop

* Ὁράτε ὅσα ὠφέλησεν ἐκείνους τε καὶ ὑμᾶς. ("Contra Celsum," VIII. 69.) † Ibid., III. 34. ‡ Ibid., I. 3.

§ Ἔντα ἂν ὀρῶσι μειράκια καὶ οἰκοτρίβων ὄχλον, καὶ ἀνοήτων ἀνθρώπων ὅμιλον. (Ibid., III. 50.)

of the shoemaker or the fuller, where they can be the sole speakers, because none is able to make any reply or objection.* Celsus subsequently makes a parody on the preaching of the apostles, and all unwittingly renders homage to their zeal and courage, for he exhibits them as braving all dangers, to spread abroad their faith in every place. He puts into their lips the following language: "I am God, or the Son of God, or the Holy Spirit. I come because the world is going to perish. And you too, O men, will perish because of your sins. But I would save you. . . . . Blessed is he who honours me. . . . . All others I devote to eternal fire. . . . . They add to these magnificent promises things mysterious, fanatical, obscure, in which the wise man can find no meaning. Everything is made to subserve the wild visions of these stupid or designing men."† We see how strange a medley Celsus makes of various Scripture expressions.

He bitterly reproaches the new religion with showing a strange predilection for men of vicious lives. Its Founder, in truth, openly avowed that He came not to call the righteous but sinners. "What is then this special prerogative of the wicked?"‡ Such a taunt cast the infinite compassion of Christ in His teeth, and reproached the father of the prodigal son with his readiness to forgive. The man who thus fails even to conceive of the mercy of God, must be equally at a loss to comprehend humility in man. Thus Celsus says again: "Those who act as equitable judges will

* Ἴεναι εἰς τὴν γυναικωνῖτιν, ἢ τὸ σκυτεῖον, ἢ τὸ κναφεῖον πείθουσιν. ("Contra Celsum," III. 55.) † Ibid., VII. 9.

‡ Τίς οὖν αὕτη ἡ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν προτίμησις; (Ibid., III. 64.)

not permit the accused to fall at their feet with groans and tears, lest they, the judges, should be influenced in their decisions rather by pity than by equity. But the God of the Gospel prefers base adulation to truth."* Such is the malignant construction put by Celsus upon the Christian virtues.

After thus defaming the adherents of the new religion, he proceeds to analyse their doctrine. He brings against it, first, the charge of being variable and inconstant, and of having already split up into the differing creeds of numberless sects. "At the commencement," he says, "when the Christians were few in number, they were all of one mind. But when they grew into a numerous body, they at once separated into countless parties, each forming a faction of its own —a practice quite in conformity with their primitive tendency.† These all condemn one another, though still retaining the common name of Christians."‡

When he comes at length to the direct attack upon Christian doctrine, he makes his assault upon three points; he ridicules the form assumed, he criticises the method followed, and finally endeavours to destroy the foundation on which the teaching rests. Such a man as Celsus was incapable of perceiving true greatness anywhere. He could as little appreciate the simplicity of the Gospel, as the sublimity of the truths it revealed. The new religion had abandoned the exclusive use of the noble languages of Greece and

* Ὁ θεὸς δ' ἄρα οὐ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν, ἄλλα ρπὸς κολακείαν δικάζει. ("Contra Celsum," III. 63.)

† Στάσεις ἰδίας ἔχειν ἕκαστοι θέλουσι. (Ibid., III. 10.)

‡ Ibid., III. 12.

Rome; it spoke to barbarous peoples in their own rude tongues, in order to make itself understood. This condescension seemed to Celsus utterly mean and unworthy.* He spoke with contempt of the homely and humble language of the prophets and apostles.† As a worthy son of Greece, and an enthusiast for artistic beauty, the philosopher frequently returned to this point, and bitterly ridiculed the simple and transparent style of Scripture, which seemed to him so far below the requirements of a refined taste, but which was in truth so far above him as to be out of reach of his admiration. The idolatry of form had totally perverted his æsthetic feeling, and simple beauty, like truth, eluded his perception; it is clear that the drapery and ornamentation of the subject in hand would alone engage his attention. Let us admit that, tried by such a test, the Gospel is but a barbarous book, but in return for such a concession, let us ask if the worst of all barbarism is not that which sacrifices substance to show, the thought to the mode of speech?

Celsus is no less severe on the method of exposition pursued by the Christians than he is on its defects of form. He complains that it lacks all the characteristics of philosophic teaching, and being the offspring of ignorance and superstition, remains faithful to its origin. It exhibits none of that dialectic learning, which links propositions together, supports them by powerful arguments, and thus gradually carries reasonable conviction to the mind.‡ The Christians despise

* "Contra Celsum," VIII. 37.

† *Φήσιν εἶναι ἰδιωτικοὺς λόγους.* (Ibid., III. 68.)

‡ Ibid., I. 2.

reason, which is our sole defence against error and grossest superstition, and which forbids our belief in fanciful apparitions, such as those of Mithra and Hercules. Many Christians will neither receive nor give proofs of that which they hold. Their ordinary language is: "Do not inquire, be satisfied to believe; faith will save thee. The wisdom of this life is evil, stupidity is good."* The closing words are evidently a travesty on Paul's declaration to the Corinthians.† Celsus affirmed that the belief in the divinity of Christ rested on no solid evidence, but simply on a blind confidence, on a visionary assurance.‡ We shall see presently with what lofty eloquence and depth of Christian wisdom, Origen meets these objections. They would be likely, nevertheless, to produce a strong impression on the adherents of the ancient philosophy, whose peculiar vaunt was that transcendent dialectic skill, which they esteemed as the very patent of intellectual nobility.

From analysing the method of Christian teaching, Celsus proceeds to the doctrine itself. He distinguishes in it two elements, the one containing incontestable truths, the other unmixed error and superstition. To the former he denies any claim whatever to originality. That which Christianity holds of truth, it holds in common with philosophy in general, or with the religions which preceded it. This Celsus maintains, first with regard to morals, and endeavours to show that the Gospel is not entitled to the honour even of purifying

* Μὴ ἐξέταζε ἀλλὰ πίστευσον καὶ ἡ πίστις σου σώσει σε. Κακὸν ἡ ἐν τῷ βίῳ σοφία, ἀγαθὸν δ' ἡ μωρία. ("Contra Celsum," I. 9.)

† See 1 Corinth. iii. 18, 19. ‡ "Contra Celsum," III. 39.

and renovating these.* He asserts that the precept enjoining humility, which he has elsewhere decried, is borrowed from a passage in the laws of Plato, wrongly construed.† The severe condemnation of the love of riches ascribed to Jesus Christ, had been read centuries before His day in the writings of the same philosopher, who had declared that he who is distinguished for his wealth cannot be distinguished for his goodness.‡ Celsus quoted the noblest passages from the Dialogues of Plato, in order to establish against the Gospel the charge of plagiarism. Faith in immortality, and the hope of the blessed life, were both derived from the same source, but had become more material and less pure by contact with Christianity.§ The ancient religions were also examined to demonstrate that Christianity had gathered its spoil on all hands. This demonstration was greatly facilitated by the fact that Celsus never drew any distinction between the doctrine of Christ and His apostles, and the heresies which marred and misrepresented it. Thus he took the *Ophites* as authentic exponents of the doctrine of Christ, and nothing could be easier than to show a striking analogy between the religion of Zoroaster and a sect like that of the Ophites, which had merely thrown a thin veil of Christian terminology over its genuine Parseeism.‖ The adoration of Jesus Christ, Celsus regards as a mere reproduction of the apotheoses of ancient Greece, which had exalted all its heroes to the Olympic mount. The Christians, he says, will not admit that these men

* Ὡς οὐ σεμνόν τι καὶ καινὸν μάθημα. ("Contra Celsum," I. 4.)
† Ibid., VI. 15. ‡ Ibid., VI. 16. § Ibid., VII. 28, 30.
‖ Αἰνίττεται ταῦτα καὶ ὁ Περσῶν λόγος. (Ibid., VI. 22, 24.)

of renown have become gods, and yet they pretend that their Jesus appeared again to them after His death.* The fable of Satan reminds one of the war of the Titans,† with this difference, that Christianity grants to the adversary of the gods a long and signal triumph before his final defeat.‡ In short, the new religion resembles that of the Egyptians; without, are majestic porticoes, lofty pillars, brilliant luminaries, sacred ceremonials; but enter the building, and you find only a vile beast, a monkey or a crocodile upon the altar. Even in Egypt, however, we have in Apis and Anubis, symbols of the heavenly powers, but here the basis of the doctrine is sheer folly.§

If Celsus judges thus severely the dogmas which had some analogy with the philosophies or the religions of pagan antiquity, what may we not expect from him in regard to those which are exclusively peculiar to Christianity, and which are all more or less closely connected with the folly of the cross? He looks upon Jesus Christ as nothing better than an impostor, followed by other deceivers equally worthless. How could he account otherwise for so many men accepting this tissue of absurdity—this nameless folly, which styles itself Christianity? Celsus concentrates his attacks upon the central dogma of Christianity—Redemption, and meets it by two objections, which seem to him decisive. He accuses it, on the one hand, of lowering the conception of God by a degrading anthropomorphism; and, on the other hand, of exalting human nature beyond all reason, by encouraging the idea that for a worm of the

* "Contra Celsum," III. 22. † Ibid., VI. 42.
‡ Ibid., VI. 12. § Ibid., III. 17.

earth like man, the Son of God should have left His glory, and come down to suffer and die. The whole argument of the Greek philosopher turns on these two points, both of them subversive of the bases of theism.

Celsus reproaches Christianity with degrading the idea of Deity, not only by the dogma of the incarnation, but by that of creation. He had already glanced at this point in his objections against Judaism; but he recurs to it with much insistance in the second portion of his book. The narrative of Genesis, which represents the creative act as the work of several days, appears to him supremely absurd; but that which is most of all repellent to him, is the idea of a free creation. From his point of view he was undoubtedly right. Deeply imbued with Platonic dualism, he could not admit that the Supreme Being, the first principle, the God absolute, should have had any contact with the world of matter. That theory of creation which referred to the Supreme God the origin of all life, physical as well as moral, came into direct collision with his philosophic prejudices. Thus he attached great importance to the doctrine of demons, those intermediate divine powers, by which the Platonic system endeavoured to bridge over the gulf between the ideal God and the world, attributing to them the organisation of matter and the production of corporeal existences. A modified polytheism thus furnished ancient philosophy with valuable safeguards for the supposed ideality of the Supreme Being. Faithful to these principles, Celsus combats at once the severe monotheism of Christianity and the Scripture doctrine of creation. He cannot recognise a God who, without any intervening agency, produces a

world of material elements. He cannot conceive of God except as a purely ideal being, having communication with the lower sphere only through the medium of inferior deities or demons. Paganism appears to him susceptible of a rational interpretation, thanks to this living chain of countless links, which, starting from the lowest existence, finally fastens itself around the throne of the Supreme God. On the other hand, he can find no means of arriving at an understanding of a religion like Christianity, which worships one God alone, and attributes to Him the creation of the entire world. Hence Celsus makes a determined opposition, not only to the Christian conception of creation, but also to that jealous monotheism which regards the demons as accursed beings, and transforms these inferior gods into powers of darkness to be resisted. "God," says Celsus, "according to Plato, has made nothing that is mortal; He has produced only the immortal; mortal beings are the work of another creation. The soul is the work of God; the body comes from the hand of another creator; it differs in nothing from the worm and the frog; it is made of the same substance, and has within it the same principle of corruption."* These other creators, by whom matter is organised, are those very inferior gods or demons, whom the Christians erroneously consign to hell. Thus the worship of demons is closely connected with the fundamental principles of the doctrine of Celsus, and it is easily to be understood that he should defend it with much tenacity, for on the issue of this particular question, secondary in importance as it might at first

* Ὁ μὲν θεὸς οὐδὲν θνητὸν ἐποίησεν, ἀλλὰ μόνα τὰ ἀθάνατα, τὰ θνητὰ ἄλλων ἔστιν ἔργα. ("Contra Celsum," IV. 54.)

sight appear, depends the issue of the conflict between monotheism and dualism. "Why," he asks, "should the worship of demons be forbidden us?* Is not the superintendence of every matter committed to some powerful administrator?" Celsus explicitly acknowledges that all nature is under the direction of demons; in fact, he holds that if Christians intend to reject demoniacal influence and aid, they must renounce life itself. "The fruits they eat, the wine they drink, the water they draw, the air they breathe,—all these good things come to them from some demon.† If they will refuse their worship to those who preside over our existence, let them take no wife, let them have no children; let them depart entirely out of life."‡ Celsus mentions approvingly the Egyptian fable which recognises some special demon or celestial being as watching over the health of each separate part of the body.§ These examples enable us definitely to understand his point of view. If he defends polytheism, and combats the Scriptural theory of the creation, he does so as the champion of Platonic dualism, and with a view to maintain the eternal opposition between the material principle and the spiritual.‖

On the same grounds Celsus absolutely rejects the idea of moral evil and of the Fall. He is led to this result by the logic of his system. In truth, if there is no liberty, there is no responsibility, and consequently

* *Διὰ τί δαίμονας οὐ θεραπευτέον.* ("Contra Celsum," VII. 68. Comp. VIII. 2–11.)

† *Οὐκ ἄρα παρά τινων δαιμόνων ἕκαστα τούτων λαμβάνουσι.* (Ibid., VIII. 28.)

‡ Ibid., VIII. 35.

§ Ibid., VIII. 58.

‖ Baur has admirably elucidated Celsus' doctrine of the demons.

no possibility of guilt. Let it once be granted that evil results necessarily from the constitution of any creature, and it can no more be imputed to him. The argument may even be carried further, and we may say that a necessary evil is not truly an evil,—that it is so only relatively and in appearance, but that it forms an ultimate part of the harmony of the whole, of the general fitness and beauty. Platonism, in spite of some happy inconsistencies, in which we recognise the assertion of the indestructible moral instinct, led, in truth, to this metaphysical optimism, doubtfully at first, more distinctly in its later and lower developments. Spirituality and unity constitute the essential good; it follows that all that is corporeal and individual is tainted with evil, and yet it is a necessity that corporeal and individual beings should exist. Hence the evil in them contributes to the general good. On this point the incompatibility was absolute between Christianity and ancient philosophy. This appears clearly in the declarations of Celsus. He says: "There neither has been in former times, nor is there now, nor ever shall be, an increase or diminution of evil. The nature of the universe is ever identical, and the production of evil is not a variable quantity."* This world, the work of God, is a perfect whole; its parts exist not for themselves, but in connection with all the rest. Every creature remains in the rank in which it was placed.† Thus, evil has no reality; it is absorbed in the universal harmony. The first deduction from such a premise is, that there can be

* Μία ἡ τῶν ὅλων φύσις καὶ ἡ αὐτή. ("Contra Celsum," IV. 62.)

†Ὁ δὲ κόσμος ὡς ἄν θεοῦ ἔργον ὁλόκληρον καὶ τέλειον ἐξ ἁπάντων γίνεται. (Ibid., IV. 99.)

no such thing as the Fall, or sin, and that God has no more reason to be angry with man than with a monkey, or any other such animal.* Matter, which is a necessary principle, is the sole source of evil.† We must observe further, that that which seems to us evil is not so in reality.‡ We do not know that it is not a good for some other man, or for the totality of beings. The other objections urged by Celsus against the Mosaic account of creation are of less moment. He accuses God of having produced or provoked the rebellion of man by the commandment given him, and he lays the fault of Adam to the charge of the Creator, on the pretext that it was foreseen; for, according to his view, liberty cannot subsist unimpaired in presence of the Divine foreknowledge.§

The same arguments which invalidate to the philosopher the records of the Creation and of the Fall, are also subversive of the theory of Redemption. In fact, if it is true that God is only an impalpable Idea, raised above the worlds; if it is true that His greatness consists in His exemption from all contact with the lower sphere, the sublime drama of Redemption, as it is presented to us in the Gospel, is a mere profanation; it is even impossible for a moment to conceive of it. God is good, beauty, blessedness; He contains in Himself all that is most excellent. If He comes down to men, He must needs undergo a change; that change cannot be other than a diminution of His beauty and blessedness; it must be a degradation, consequently

* "Contra Celsum," IV. 99. † Ὕλῃ *πρόσκειται.* (Ibid., IV. 66.)
‡ Ὅτι *κἂν σοί τι δοκῇ κακὸν, οὕπω δῆλον εἰ κακὸν ἔστιν.* (Ibid., IV. 70.)
§ Ibid., VI. 63.

a transformation from good to evil. But this transformation is impossible, for only the perishable is susceptible of change; that which is immortal is, on the contrary, by its own nature, immutable. God, then, cannot be the subject of any change.* Celsus goes so far as to brand as scandalous the idea of the incarnation in any form.† But supposing that such an event had been within the range of the possible, why should the idea of bringing men back to righteousness only have occurred to God after so many ages? ‡ Must we accept the Christian notion that the contemplation of the Most High, being a thing difficult to finite natures, God brought His Spirit down to dwell in a body like ours, that we might grasp and possess it under this form?§ But why, in such a case, give to His Spirit so mean a dwelling-place? Could He not have clothed Him in a celestial form which would have forbidden the possibility of doubt?‖ If the Divine Spirit really animated the body of Christ, that body should have surpassed all other mortal forms in grandeur, beauty, strength, and majesty. It is, in truth, impossible that one who carries within him a divine element not possessed by others, should not be superior to them; and yet this Christ differed in nothing from other men; He was, it is said, small of stature, and His face had neither beauty nor nobleness.¶ If God, like the Jupiter of the drama, suddenly awaked from long slumber to save the race of man, why did He send His Spirit into

* Οὐκ ἂν οὖν ταύτην τὴν μεταβολὴν θεὸς δέχοιτο. ("Contra Celsum," IV. 34.)

† Ibid., IV. 2.

‡ Μετὰ τοσοῦτον αἰῶνα. (Ibid., IV. 9.)

§ Ibid., VI. 69.

‖ Ibid., VI. 73.

¶ Ἀλλ ὡς φάσι μικρὸν καὶ δυσειδὲς καὶ ἀγεννὲς ἦν. (Ibid., VI. 75.)

a remote corner of the earth? He might have diffused it through a multitude of bodies, and thus sent it throughout the whole world. Are we not struck with the humorousness of the notion, when we read, in a comic Greek poet, that Jupiter, just awaked from sleep, sent Mercury to the Athenians and Spartans? "Do you not give us yet greater cause for laughter, O you who declare that the Son of God has been sent to the Jews?* It appears as if, in His sleep, God had forgotten the orders He had previously given by Moses to His people; for He had commanded them to enrich themselves by spoil, to pour out the blood of their enemies like water, sparing neither small nor great. And now, behold! this so-called Son of God proclaims a law precisely contrary. He preaches poverty and forgiveness of injuries. How can such a contradiction be explained? Has God condemned His own legislation?"† Celsus concludes the whole of this discussion of the incarnation by accusing the Christians of having fallen into abject materialism. They desire, in fact, to behold God with the bodily eye, instead of resting satisfied with the moral intuition commended by philosophy. "You are the most absurd of men," he says, "you who repudiate as idols other visible gods, in order to worship yourselves an image which is the most contemptible of idols. An idol, do I say? Nay, a dead man, whom you call the image of the Eternal Father!"‡

Celsus foresees that the Christians will point to the

* Οὐ καταγελαστότερον πεποιηκέναι Ἰουδαίοις πεμπόμενον τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν υἱόν. ("Contra Celsum," VI. 78.)

† Ἢ τῶν ἰδίων νόμων μετέγνω; (Ibid., VII. 18.)

‡ Τὸ δὲ ὡς ἀληθῶς εἰδώλου ἀθλιώτερον, καὶ μηδὲ εἴδωλον ἔτι, αλλ' ὡς νεκρὸν σέβοντες, καὶ πατέρα ὅμοιον αὐτῷ ζητοῦντες (Ibid., VII. 36.)

miracles of Christ. He proceeds, therefore, at once to reduce these to the lowest possible value. He does not deny them. He believes, like all his contemporaries, that hidden forces slumber in the deep heart of nature, and can be called forth by magic. He does not, therefore, call in question the miraculous power of Jesus Christ and His apostles. "Be it so," he says; "we accept these facts as genuine."* But he places these miracles on a par with the sorceries of the magicians of Egypt. Did any one ever dream of regarding those men as the sons of God, who, for so many coins, wrought a thousand prodigies, cast out demons, called up the souls of heroes, and healed the sick? Celsus held that sorcery could exert its power through men who were the captives of matter; but this was an additional reason for him to treat it with contempt, and he delighted in casting this reproach upon the Founder of Christianity.

After charging the new religion with miserably degrading the conception of God, Celsus proceeds to his next accusation against it, that of unreasonably exalting the human creature. Strange that this proud philosopher, who could not find sarcasms bitter enough to express his contempt for the humility enjoined in the Gospel, should take pleasure in depreciating man, in disputing his divine sonship, and tearing from his brow the crown which sin itself had not been able wholly to destroy. The proud Platonist, who would be indignant to be for a moment classed among the humble and ignorant worshippers of a crucified Lord, who would feel his dignity compromised by accepting the

* "Contra Celsum," I. 68, II. 50.

doctrine of the Fall, does not hesitate to inflict an indelible brand upon humanity. Epithets of adequate scorn fail him for the miserable Galileans who gather round a cross as their standard; yet, proud philosopher as he is, he, by his system, drags the whole race of man down into the deep mire, and places him beneath the brute. Thus does pride lead to the lowest place, while humility rises to the highest. The Gospel preserves respect for humanity, even while it condemns; the philosophy of Celsus degrades while it exculpates. Nothing can ever confer higher honour on humanity than the doctrine that God has given Himself a ransom for it. There is as much meanness as pride in not accepting the infinite price of our salvation; for those who vilify human nature do so only that they may dispense with the duty of repentance; they vainly hope to rise more readily from a lower level.

The pretension of both Jews and Christians to a share in the most amazing favours of the Deity, appears to Celsus the climax of absurdity. He compares them to ants emerging from their ant-hill, to frogs making a chorus in their marshes, to worms holding conclave in a poisonous slough, and devouring one another while they contested, as it were, for the palm of sin. "It is to us alone," they say, "God reveals His purposes; for us He neglects the world, the heavens, and all that the earth contains. His care is solely for us; to us alone He sends His messengers unceasingly, and His one supreme concern is the manner in which we may be eternally united to Him."* These worms

* Πάντα κόσμον καὶ τὴν οὐράνιον φορὰν ἀπολιπὼν, ἡμῖν μόνοις ἐμπολιτεύεται. ("Contra Celsum," IV. 23.)

of the earth go so far in their audacity as to say: "We are the beings most closely related to God; He has made us entirely in His image.* All things are subject to us; the earth, the water, the air, the stars—all have been created for us, and are bound to obey us. And since some of us are defiled by sin, God will come Himself, or will send His Son to destroy the wicked in everlasting fire, and to bring us into life eternal."† "Such pretensions," adds Celsus, "would be more tolerable on the part of worms or frogs than on the part of Jews or Christians."

It is not so much on Jews and Christians, however, as on human nature itself, that he lavishes his scorn. That worm of the earth, which he will crush with iron heel into the very dust, rather than allow the possibility that a god should have stooped from heaven to save him, is *man*. He finds an impious satisfaction in placing him on the lowest step of the scale of being; and with a view to this end, he traces a minute parallel between man and the lower animals, which is entirely to the advantage of the latter. They live at less cost to themselves than man; they have no need to water with the sweat of their brow the aliments on which they feed. All nature is a larder laden with plenty for them.‡ We have no right to esteem ourselves better than the beasts because we hunt and devour them. They also hunt and devour us, without the trouble of training a pack of hounds or setting snares.§ Do men point proudly to their

* Θεὸς ἐστὶν, εἶτα μετ' ἐκεῖνον ἡμεῖς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γεγονότες παντῃ ὅμοιοι θεῷ. ("Contra Celsum," IV. 23.)

† Ἀφίξεται θεὸς ἢ πέμψει τὸν υἱόν. (Ibid., IV. 23.)

‡ Ibid., IV. 76. § Ibid., IV. 78.

civilisation—to the cities they build, the laws they make, the magistrates they appoint? Celsus answers: "Look at the ants and the bees. The best regulated city in the world cannot be compared with a hive. That little kingdom has its wars and its victories, and the dead bodies of the drones show how rigorously justice is executed. The ants have their regular interments, solemnly performed for their dead.* They have a sufficiency of reason, a common understanding, generally accepted truths,† and it is even possible that were our ear fine enough to catch the sound, we might hear them conversing together. Any observer of earth from the height of heaven, would not perceive wherein lay the difference between the ants and men."‡ If it is urged that man is at least a religious animal, Celsus replies that the birds have as much religion. We are even bound to suppose that they are in closer communion with the gods, since we address ourselves to the birds in order to discover the Divine will. Elephants might give man lessons in fidelity to engagements, and they merit the palm of piety.§ The beasts are then not only wiser than man, they are also more precious in the sight of God.‖ From all this it results that the world was not made for man, but for lions, eagles, and dolphins. It is strange to see the representative of philosophy thus exalting instinct far above reason, and proudly rejecting the folly of the cross in the name of such humiliating wisdom. He was led to these ignoble conclusions by his pantheism, which

* "Contra Celsum," IV. 84.

† *Λόγου συμπλήρωσις εστι παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ κοιναὶ εὐνοιαι καθολικῶν τινών.* (Ibid.)

‡ Ibid., IV. 85.

§ Ibid., IV. 88.

‖ *Οὐ μόνον σοφώτερα εἶναι τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων τῆς ἀνθρώπων φύσεως ἀλλά καὶ θεοφιλέστερα.* (Ibid., IV. 99.)

completely removed the barrier between the material and moral world. Take away liberty, and man *is* the most miserable of creatures.

This negation of freedom leads Celsus to declare the great moral transformation which Christianity claims to effect through the new birth, to be an impossibility. "It is evident," he says, "that since sin is a natural tendency developed by habit, neither punishment nor pardon can do away with it.* Such therefore as man is by nature, such he will remain. Weak and wretched now, he has no higher estate to expect in the future; the resurrection of the body is an absurd fable." "The Christians," he says again, "are mad enough to imagine that when their God shall have made the fire of His wrath burn like a furnace, and when the whole world shall be consumed, they alone shall be preserved, and not those only who shall be yet alive at the time, but those also who shall be already dead, and that these, clothed again in the same bodies, shall rise from the ground. This hope is a worthy consummation of their abject life.† Can the soul of man desire to dwell for ever in a body that has seen corruption? How can a body turned to dust recover its primal elements? The Christians reply, according to their wont, that with God all things are possible, as if it were possible for God to do things vile or contrary to nature. I do not dispute that God can give to the soul eternal life; but corpses are, to use the expression of Heraclitus, more vile than the clods of the earth. And shall eternal existence

* Δῆλον ὅτι τοὺς ἁμαρτάνειν πεφυκότας τε καὶ εἰθισμένους, οὔδεις ἄν οὐδὲ κολάζων πάντῃ μεταβάλοι μήτιγε ἐλεῶν. ("Contra Celsum," III. 65.)

† Ἀτεχνῶς σκωλήκων ἡ ἐλπίς. (Ibid., V. 14.)

be ascribed to this polluted flesh? Such a thing, which is contrary to all reason, is neither in the will nor in the power of God."* We trace in these words the dominant idea of the Platonist, that unconquerable dualism which made impossible any reconciliation between him and a belief founded upon theism.

Such was, in brief, this studied attack of Greek philosophy on the Gospel. Learning, skill, irony, calumny, all were invoked and did their utmost. In the book of Celsus, we have evidently the last and most concentrated effort of the pagan mind to stifle the new religion. It has been worth our while to pause and examine it, for the vigour and art displayed in the use of its weapons, the care taken to neglect no available resource, the subtlety of argument, the close concatenation of proofs, the keenness of the polemics,—all prove how formidable an enemy Christianity had already shown itself to the pagan world. By the chafing rage of its opponents, we may measure the progress of its influence.†

(c.) Attacks of Philosophic Theosophy upon Christianity.

Celsus represents the ancient philosophic tradition of Greece in his insolent disdain for all strange doctrine, and especially for that which had its origin in a land of barbarism. But he could not check the strong mental current setting in in his day in a very different

* *Σάρκα δὴ αἰώνιον ἀποφῆναι παρὰ λόγον, οὔτε βουλήσεται ὁ θεὸς οὔτε δυνήσεται.* ("Contra Celsum," V. 15.)

† We have drawn the plan of attack pursued by Celsus from the fragments scattered through Origen's great Apology. An attentive study of these fragments has enabled us to determine their connection, and to arrange them on a general principle, which imparts to them a striking unity of character and purpose.

direction. No school of the past, and no ancient religious form, was adequate to satisfy men's minds, and the majority, who were not led by this consciousness of moral unrest to embrace Christianity, or to espouse the Epicurean philosophy, took refuge in that vague syncretism which mingled confusedly all ideas and all mysteries, and was not unwilling even to borrow more than one feature from Christianity. This tendency, which had caused the success of the mysteries of Mithras among the popular ranks, and which had given birth to Neo-Platonism, was to present in its turn an opposing face to the new religion. Seeking to meet the same needs, it could not endure so formidable a rivalry; it was unable, however, to assume an attitude of violent hostility. This was forbidden by the breadth of its eclectic principles, and if it was true to itself, it had no right to repudiate absolutely any form of religion. In the opposition offered by the representatives of this school to Christian ideas, we shall not find the bitterness of Celsus or the contemptuous irony of Lucian; in its calmness and self-restraint it was perhaps even more fraught with danger, and it willingly left to other schools the task of drawing the practical consequences from its indirect attacks. A very curious book gives us an acquaintance with these timorous and uncandid polemics—the "History of Apollonius of Tyana," by Philostratus. We have already spoken of the hero of this philosophical romance, when tracing the general outline of the age in which he lived; but we then only touched upon the historical basis of the book, which a skilful rhetorician has elaborated into a brilliant fabric. These legendary embellishments of the facts will be all we

have to notice now. They are indeed full of significance from another than a literary point of view. Philostratus is a controversialist disguised as a novelist; his aim is to exalt, in opposition to the Messiah of the Christians, the Messiah of the Pythagoreans—the wise man *par excellence* in the estimation of the writer and of his party. He designs to make the ideal evoked or realised by the Gospel pale before another and very different ideal, which he deems far more dazzling in the fantastic colours with which he decks it; and that he may lose no advantage, he does not shrink from borrowing various accessories from the sacred narratives. In order to be satisfied that we are not indulging a mere groundless supposition, it will suffice to point out the circumstances under which this book was issued. Philostratus was living near to the Empress Julia Domna, the wife of Septimus Severus, a lady tinctured with the philosophic eclecticism which was a few years later to be so brilliantly developed in her own family at the court of Alexander Severus. That the triumph of this school might be assured, it was needful at any price to supplant Christianity, or at least to involve it, in spite of itself, in the religious revolution to be inaugurated by the eclectic school. The extraordinary ascendancy gained by the new religion was due in great part to the character of its Founder, to the sublime incarnation of its doctrine in the person of Jesus Christ. There could be no surer method of nullifying its influence than an attempt to produce some similar effect on the side of the rival school. Let that school, too, show an embodiment of its principles in some illustrious master. No man could so well meet the requirements of this

daring design as the famous magician, Apollonius of Tyana, whose person had already assumed gigantic proportions in the popular imagination, thanks to the halo of legends which had gathered around him. Might not he satisfy all the restless instincts of the age by his life of adventure, passed in traversing the world in quest of new beliefs, by the prodigies which sprang up everywhere beneath his feet, and by his hatred of tyranny? Such a man might well form an ideal type for his school, and a few tender traits might with advantage be caught from the hated stories of the Gospel, and added to this new figure. Philostratus hoped thus to unite in the person of a single man, who should be at once prophet and philosopher, the noblest attributes of philosophy and religion, and to satisfy alike the ignorant masses and the cultivated few. The life of Apollonius of Tyana was evidently composed with this intention. We feel that the author's whole endeavour is to represent the famous magician as the perfect man, in whom all the aspirations of the ancient world found their response.*

The characteristics borrowed from the Gospels are many in the book of Philostratus, and are easily recognisable, in spite of the redundant ornamentation with which they are overlaid. Miraculous signs announce the appearance of Apollonius in the world; his mother receives divine intimations of the event in dreams; Heaven itself intervenes; a lightning-flash cleaves the

* Neander denies (wrongly, in our opinion.) this polemical intention. ("Kirchen Geschichte," I. 179.) [Eng. Trans. Bohn's Ed., I. 42.] Baur, with his accustomed penetration, makes it very evident, although he exaggerates the conciliatory tendency of the book of Philostratus.

sea, and rises again into the upper air—the brilliant symbol of the high destiny of the great man.* He writes no books. This is not his mission, as it was not the mission of Christ. His language is not pompous, subtle, nor vulgar, but marked by a stern simplicity.† He skilfully draws the highest teachings from the simplest occasions, and constantly uses parables taken from field life.‡ His words are compared to a living spring at which thirsty spirits drink;§ a few humble disciples follow him from place to place, and he devotes himself to them with the most complete abnegation of self. His discernment of the thoughts and dispositions of his interlocutors is admirable; he reads their very hearts, and the life of those who come to him is revealed to him by a mysterious intuition.‖ The love which he inspires in his disciples is not, however, strong enough to keep them by his side in the hour of danger; the greater part forsake him on the eve of his trial. One makes sickness a pretext for his desertion; another, the want of money; a third wishes to see his home once again; a fourth has had terrible dreams; and of his twenty-four disciples, eight only continue faithful to him as far as to Rome.¶ Throughout the whole course of his life, Apollonius goes from place to place, doing good, and crowds everywhere follow his footsteps. He makes known purifications by which the guilty may be cleansed, and sends them away with the pardon of the gods.** "When he came to Ephesus, working-men forsook their occupations and followed him, some because they ad-

* Philostratus, "Life of Apollonius of Tyana," I. v. † Ibid., I. xvii.
‡ Ibid., I. iii; IV. iv. (See the parable of the Sparrows.)
§ Ibid., IV. xxiv. ‖ Ibid., VI. ii.
¶ Ibid., IV. xxxvii. ** Ibid., VI. v.

mired his wisdom, others, his countenance, his manner of life, his habits, or all these things together. . . . Many sick persons, seeking for health, went to him, led by a divine inspiration."* He delivers his simple discourses, sometimes on the steps of a temple, sometimes on the hills or in the fields. He is very severe on sensuality and pride, and preaches to the common people the love of wisdom ;† his miracles carry his fame far and wide.

There is a transparent imitation of the Gospel in all this general outline of the life of Apollonius. It is still more marked in some special details of the narrative. Apollonius arrives at the court of the King of Babylon, and there at once obtains great credit. An officer of the palace is taken in a flagrant act of adultery in the harem. When asked what punishment is to be inflicted on the guilty pair, Apollonius grants them pardon.‡ At Rhodes he meets a young man who lived only for selfish ease and pleasure. The magician reproves him sternly for his love of riches.§ At Athens he cures a young demoniac, commanding, with authority, the evil spirit to come out of his victim. The demon only obeys after having obtained permission to pass into a neighbouring statue. A young girl, of the family of the consul at Rome, had all the appearance of death ; her parents were already mourning her decease. "I will dry your tears," said Apollonius, and having touched the maiden and pronounced a few words over her, he restores her alive to her family. The magician refuses any recompense, saying that it was impossible to

* Philostratus, IV. i.
† Ibid., IV. ii.
‡ Ibid., I. xxxvi. Compare John xii.
§ Ibid., V. xxiii.

know whether life was really extinct or not in the form he had restored. This story is at once a parody and a criticism upon the miracle performed by Christ in the house of Jairus.*

When a prisoner, and on the eve of death, Apollonius tells his familiar disciples that he will appear to them at a time when they believe him to be dead; and, in truth, when they are afterwards assembled in deep distress, their master suddenly stands in their midst. To remove any apprehension that they are beholding only a phantom, he commands them to touch his body with their hands, and, like Thomas, they are thus convinced of the reality of his return.† Apollonius has also his ascension-day: in a temple of Crete he disappears from before the eyes of men, and a chorus of young girls' voices is heard welcoming him and singing this song: "Quit earth and rise, to the highest heaven rise!"‡ Yet more; he has several times since reappeared to men to confirm his doctrine.

The analogies between this life of Apollonius and the life of Christ, are very palpable. The book of Philostratus initiates us into the tactics of the defenders of paganism; they sought to strike a blow at Christianity with its own weapons, and to supplant, by imitating it. But here also, as in the mysteries of Mithras, the resemblance is simply superficial; the real dissonances are deep and radical. Apollonius remains still the Christ of pantheistic eclecticism, and of oriental gnosticism, the vague personification of its wandering and fitful dreams. He realises the fond ideal of that school—the fusion of all existing systems. He never ap-

* Philostratus, IV. xlv. † Ibid., VIII. xii. ‡ Ibid., VIII. xxxi.

pears for a moment as the bearer of a sovereign message from heaven, of a new revelation, which abases all the religions and philosophies of the past, by proclaiming them impotent or insufficient. No; the past preserves all its claims, since, judging by the life of the great travelling theosophist, the truth lies enclosed or concealed in the ancient creeds and schools. All that Apollonius does is to part the veil which hides it from vulgar eyes, and thus pagan antiquity is saved the painful humiliation which Christianity brought upon it by the proclamation of a strange God. It is admitted that no religion or school contains the whole treasure of thought and faith necessary to mankind; the precious fragments are scattered as it were through the whole world, and must be gathered up one by one. For this purpose, Apollonius traverses so many lands; but the treasure is, nevertheless, to be found upon the earth, and man is not compelled to receive it as a free gift from Heaven. Philostratus repeatedly insists on the veneration felt by his hero for all the gods. When he arrived in any town, his first visit was to the temple; he delighted in interrogating the priests. As soon as he began to teach in the sanctuaries, the gods became the objects of greater reverence, and men pressed into the holy places as if they hoped to receive the most generous gifts from the divinity.* Apollonius took pleasure in all holy places; he went assiduously from one to the other, and said: *Not one god repels me!*† He carried his veneration for the divinities of every order to such a length, that he severely blamed Hippolytus for withholding his homage from Aphrodite.‡ He thus placed

* Philostratus, IV. xli. † Ibid., V. xl. ‡ Ibid., VI. iii.

himself at the head of the pagan reaction, but it was with a view to purify and expand paganism. He seemed to serve the cause of progress by abjuring the narrow exclusiveness which had so long prevented the commingling of nations and of ideas. "Greece," he said, "is everywhere to a wise man. He looks upon no country as barbarous which is governed by the laws of virtue."* Faithful to these principles, Apollonius travels over the world, and slights no source of information. Following the bent of the age in which he lived, he held in highest estimation the wisdom of the East, and, to acquire this, he undertook long and perilous journeys. He sought the countries which had the most potent charms for the imagination of his contemporaries. After visiting all the temples of Greece, and being initiated into all the mysteries, he fixed his abode for a time at Babylon, there to hold intercourse with the magi.† On the banks of the Nile he listened to the austere representatives of the most ancient order of priesthood;‡ he never stayed in his travels till he had conversed with the Brahmins beneath the sacred forests of India, and had been initiated into their doctrine of boundless asceticism. "You have opened to me the gates of heaven by your wisdom!" he wrote to them subsequently.§

Philostratus is careful to place the picture of these distant travels of the sage in highly poetical colours on the canvas. Apollonius finds on the Caucasus the fetters which bound Prometheus. In Egypt he sees the famous statue of Memnon, and India is to him a

* Philostratus, I. xxxv.
† Ibid., I. xxv.
‡ Ibid., VII. i.
§ Ibid., III. v.

land of marvels, where strange animals, almost divine, tread the shores of mighty rivers beneath a dome of giant trees. The popular imagination thus found everything to flatter and delight it in the motley gospel of Philostratus. Apollonius speaks to Nature as its lord, and is always obeyed; he penetrates the mystery of its hidden forces, and controls them at his will. In vain does Philostratus attempt to distinguish him from the vulgar charlatans, the fraudulent sorcerers, whose name at this time was legion. After all his endeavours, his hero remains simply a magician still.* It was indeed trouble taken for naught, to attempt to present him in any other character to a generation eager after the marvellous and devoted to the arts of magic. Apollonius also gratified by his austerity the predilections of an age which, under the influence of oriental doctrines, was marked by enthusiasm for the ascetic; and he inspired admiration even in those who would not have been willing to bind themselves to so rigid a course of self-mortification. Full of a lofty scorn for all earthly treasures, the sage rejected with disdain the gold and diamonds which admiring kings laid at his feet.† As a true disciple of Pythagoras, he abstained entirely from the flesh of animals,‡ and renounced all the gentle solace of domestic life. He walked barefoot, roughly clad, possessing nothing that he could call his own, carrying his traveller's staff in his hand—the stern pilgrim of philosophy. "I am bound to go," he said, "wherever wisdom and the god within prompt me."§ Philostratus has recourse to a sure method of

* Philostratus, VIII. ii.
† Ibid., II. xl.
‡ Ibid, II. vii.
§ Ibid., I. xviii.

enhancing yet more the glory and influence of his hero, by making him a sort of tribune philosopher, who openly resists tyrants, and boldly suffers for liberty. He speaks of him as the tutor of Vespasian, who is supposed to have learned from his counsels, how to govern the world with justice. "The art of governing," said Apollonius to the future emperor, "is the highest upon earth, but it cannot be taught. I will tell thee, however, that which thou mayst observe with profit. Look not upon that revenue as true riches which comes from men groaning under taxation, for that is false and blackened gold which is wrung from tears. Keep within just bounds the liberty thou hast to do all thy pleasure, and thou shalt use it well. Let the law, O prince, reign over thee!"* In the presence of such tyrants as Nero and Domitian, Apollonius shows himself indomitable: he resists them to their face. When brought before the bar of Domitian, he pays so little regard to the Roman Cæsar, that he does not even glance at him, and when the accuser bids him look on the god of all men, he lifts his eyes to heaven.† Forgetful of himself, he is much more anxious to defend the cause of truth than to save his own life. "O emperor!" he exclaims, "stay thy cruelties and the shedding of blood. Do to philosophy what thou will, for it is invulnerable; but cease to make men weep, for at this very hour a terrible lamentation rises from sea and shore, to condemn the tongue of thy sycophants, who cause thee to be hated of the world."‡

After his miraculous deliverance, Apollonius, at Ephesus, announced to his disciples the death of

* Philostratus, V. xxxvi. † Ibid., VIII. iv. ‡ Ibid., VIII. vii.

Domitian at the very hour in which the tyrant fell.* Apollonius thus appears not only as a philosophic messiah, an ascetic, a great magician; he enacts also the part of a political messiah, and thus appeals to the passions of the people no less than to their imagination and religious aspirations.

In substance, his doctrine contains nothing that is original. He expresses the current ideas out of which sprang his Platonism; he simply casts over them a veil of spirituality, borrowed from the religion of Christ. Dualism and metempsychosis lie at the basis of his teaching, and on a convenient principle of allegorism, he sanctions all superstitions and worships all gods. His discourses bear the impress of the mystical Platonism of his age; he recognises the long chain of intermediary divinities which act upon Nature. He preaches austerity extending to asceticism, rebukes avarice, and attaches much importance to the inner life. We discern the influence of the new religion when we find him protesting against a devotion which is external only, and which pretends to supply the lack of piety and holiness by costly offerings and ostentatious sacrifices. "The superb gifts of the guilty," he says, "ought to be regarded, not as an offering to the gods, but as the ransom for crimes committed." The discourses put into his lips by Philostratus are, with a few striking exceptions, long and tedious, subtle and cold. There is no palpitating life beneath those pompous words; and but for the miracles ascribed to him, Apollonius would have remained in the deepest obscurity, for he had not the power of clothing his

* Philostratus, VIII. xxv.

thoughts in language which could give them new life.

Thus the attempt of Philostratus to set up the famous magician as the rival of Jesus Christ, was doomed to ignominious failure; it remains on record as nothing better than a parody of a sublime original.

The same school of thought may have very diverse exponents. While the eclecticism of the day found elevated expression in the writings of Philostratus, it was associated in the romance of Apuleius with all that was degrading and vile. It is not strange that the few words devoted to Christianity by this writer should contain a gross insult. Describing one of the heroines of low degree, who are the favourite themes of his impure muse, he gives it to be understood that she was a Christian, and he ridicules and slanders the new religion in the person of this woman, whose vicious life has reduced her to the lowest stage of moral vileness. "She was," he says, "malicious, cruel, unchaste, as greedy over her shameful gains as prodigal in her foul expenditure,—a stranger to all good faith, the avowed enemy to all virtue and modesty. She despised and trampled upon the holy gods; then, in the guise of religion, she feigned the false worship of one god, whom she declared to be God alone—an idle farce, by which she deceived the world."*

Neo-Platonism occupied the forefront of the pagan reaction. It might be foreseen that it, in its turn,

* "Tunc spretis atque calcatis divinis numinibus, in vicem certæ religionis, mentita sacrilega præsumptione dei, quem predicaret unicum." (Apuleius, "Metamorph.," IX. Panckoucke Edit., II. 195.)

would assail Christianity, for it was well aware that this religion of the poor and lowly was its victorious rival in the empire of the world. A man, who seemed admirably adapted to be an apostle of the Christian faith, was the vehement organ of this opposition. Porphyry, in spite of the elevation of his mind and that profound melancholy which never forsook him, remained an ardent adherent of paganism. He vainly imagined that he could renew its life by infusing into it the transcendent mysticism of his system. He was secretly conscious, nevertheless, that the ancient beliefs of polytheism melted away in his philosophic crucible; still he clung all the more tenaciously to the forms and rites of the religion of his fathers, and every innovation in religious usage excited his lively indignation. He wrote to his wife: "One must honour the gods according to the customs of one's country."* His book "On the Oracles" contains a large number of so-called oracles, all directed against the Christian doctrine. There we find the following passage: "A man came to consult Apollo as to the best means of bringing back his wife to the worship of the national gods. The reply was, that it would be easier to write on running water, or to fly through the air, than to prevent a deluded woman from worshipping her dead god."† Elsewhere Porphyry quotes an oracle opposing the divinity of Christ, though at the same time rendering homage to His character. "The soul of the pious man," it is there said, "after the body has undergone certain sufferings, rises to the fields of heaven." Porphyry adds, in the

* *Τιμᾷν τὸ θεῖον κατὰ τὰ πάτρια.* ("Epist. ad Marcell.")

† St. Augustine, "De Civit. Dei," XVI. 23.

form of a commentary, that Christ is not to be blamed, but those who will make a god of Him. Not content with these indirect attacks, the Neo-Platonist philosopher composed an important work against Christianity. Its title resembles that given by Celsus to his book, but its spirit is much more serious. His discourses against Christianity were divided into fifteen books.* Of these we possess only fragmentary portions; but in the judgment of his contemporaries this book breathed out bitter hatred against the Gospel. Theodoret regarded Porphyry as the most implacable enemy the Christians had.† It is not possible to determine what was the plan of his work. If we may judge from the quotations made by the Fathers, it was less philosophical than that of Celsus. Porphyry's principal objections took the form of three queries: "1. Why was the mission of Jesus Christ to the world so long delayed; and what became of men in the ages preceding it?‡ 2. On what grounds do Christians reject the sacrifices, if it is true that they were appointed by the God of the Old Testament? 3. What relation finally is there between eternal punishment and our sins? Has not Jesus declared that, with the measure we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again?" §

Porphyry's great aim was to destroy the credibility of Scripture, and he subjected the sacred text to a

* Λόγος φιλαλήθης πρὸς τοὺς χριστιάνους.

† Ὁ πάντων ἡμῖν ἔχθιστος. ("Gr. Affect.," 10, 12.)

‡ "Quid egerunt tot sæculorum homines ante Christum." (Augustine, "Epist.," cii.)

§ Augustine, "Epist.," c.; Hieronymus, "Epist.," cxxxiii.; "Ad Ctesiph.," xix.

minute examination. He passed in review the books of Moses, and refused to Christians the right of having recourse to an allegorical exegesis in order to evade the difficulties of the text. The book of Daniel especially was the subject of his animadversions; he denied its genuineness, and asserted that the prophecies contained in it had been devised after the events, under the reign of Antiochus.* He maintained that the style of Daniel indicates a Greek original translated into Hebrew.† The New Testament was also subjected to the test of his skilful but ill-affected criticism. Sometimes he took exception to the miraculous element;‡ sometimes he charged Christ with self-contradiction, as, for example, in the fourth of John, where, after telling His brethren that He would not go up to Jerusalem,§ He did repair, as we are told, to the Feast of Tabernacles. But he laid most stress on the dispute which took place at Antioch between St. Peter and St. Paul. He reproached the former with falling into a gross error; the latter with giving way to anger; and this dissentience between the two leaders of the primitive Church seemed to him to shake the very foundations of the Christian doctrine.‖ We note in Porphyry the dawning tendency to exalt the teaching of the Master, to the detriment of the interpretation given by His disciples,—a method very effectual in disposing

* Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xix.

† Hieronymus, "Procœmium in Daniel."

‡ Ibid., "Liber quæst. hebraic. in Genes."

§ Ibid., "Epist. ad Pommach."

‖ "Volens et illi maculam erroris, et huic procacitatis, et in commune ficti dogmatis accusare mendacium dum inter se ecclesiarum principes discrepent." (Hieronymus, "Procœmium in Gal. Epist.," lxxxix., ad Augustinum.)

of the Gospel, which has come down to us only through the apostles.*

The "Life of Pythagoras," by Jamblichus, resembles in many respects the "Life of Apollonius of Tyana," by Philostratus; it is not, however, at all so palpably an imitation of the evangelical narrative. On this account, Hierocles, the last of the pagan authors of this era who wrote against Christianity, made use of the work of Philostratus rather than that of Jamblichus, to sustain his comparison of the miracles of Christ with the arts of the necromancers. He says: "You hold Jesus Christ to be God because He restored sight to some blind persons, and wrought other prodigies of a similar kind; and yet the Greeks do not regard Apollonius, the great miracle-worker, as a god, but only as a man favoured by the gods." Hierocles boldly assailed the moral character of Jesus Christ, and repeated the vile calumnies of Celsus.† We know that this controversialist was at the same time a cruel proconsul; he governed the province of Bithynia, and thus had it in his power to make victims of opponents whom he failed to convince. This is the weak and unfair side of all the polemics of paganism against Christianity. The pen of the writer is too readily exchanged for the sword of the executioner. Pascal truly says, if we are predisposed to believe a history the witnesses of which lay down their lives in its confirmation, we are on the same principle predisposed to despise a doctrine, the advocates of which put their opponents to death.

* On the polemics of Porphyry against Christianity, see Holsténius, "Dissertatio de vita et scriptis Porphyri." Baur, work quoted, p. 408. A thesis by M. Rognor, Montauban, 1847.

† Lactantius, "De Morte Persecutor.," v. 2. Eusebius, "Ad. Hier."

CHAPTER II.

THE DEFENCE OR APOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

§ I. *Preliminary Reflections.*

(a.) Three Schools of Apologists.

We have seen how Christianity, subjected to the assaults of brute force and of science, of the sword and of the pen, replied to the former by the heroic firmness of its adherents, who, laying down their lives in its defence, guaranteed its enduring vitality. We have yet to note its response to the onslaught of the proud wisdom of the ancient world, to that haughty challenge of pagan philosophers to which we have just listened. Christianity has too much respect for the human mind to be contented with a victory achieved only in the outer life, and it is well prepared to satisfy reason, while still holding it in subjection to a higher power. The defender of the Christian faith is untrue to his mission if he evades a fair discussion, and appeals instead to any external authority whatever. His work is to establish the divine revelation upon solid evidence, not to cling to it with a blind tenacity which shrinks from full and candid examination of its tenets. He is bound to take his stand on ground common to all, and to repudiate any peculiar privilege or exemption as a confession of weakness, and equivalent

to a pre-acknowledgment of defeat. The power of the apologist may be measured by his fearlessness. It is not then surprising that the age which gave birth to the martyrs, should have produced also the greatest apologists. These true philosophers made no evasions, used no pious subterfuges to excuse themselves from replying seriously to their adversaries; they did not seek an unworthy covert from dangerous discussion, in the divine simplicity of the Gospel, or in the folly of the cross. They did not make their sufferings a shield against all attacks, nor did they consider that the honourable wounds of the persecuted Church were an adequate refutation of her assailants. The representatives of the new religion did not allow a single accusation, a single objection to fall to the ground; they overcame pagan philosophy with its own weapons. The intellectual superiority of Christianity is no less marked than the higher tone of its morals. It would have been strange had it been otherwise; the bonds which bind together man's moral and intellectual faculties are of such a kind, that that which ennobles and purifies the soul must ultimately expand and raise the intellect. Though Christianity had for its first witnesses fishermen from the Lake of Galilee, it was nevertheless itself the grandest of all philosophies; and as soon as the Church had leisure to add to its faith the advantages of high culture, as soon as it found itself constrained by the tactics of its assailants to plead its cause before the bar of science, its defenders took their place at the head of the intellectual movement of their day. It is a capital error to suppose that to renounce the vain pride of reason is to renounce intellectual

superiority; the apology of the Fathers gives striking evidence to the contrary.

We draw a line of distinction, among the writings devoted to the defence of Christianity, between those which may be regarded as petitions to the emperors, simply pleading the cause of the Christians against injustice, and those which present a full and argumentative apology of Gospel truth. We have before us now only the latter branch of the defence of the new religion. In examining it we shall be guided less by order of time than of thought; and we shall divide the apologists into three classes, ranged rather according to the spirit and purpose, than the date of their works. The chronological and philosophical order, however, very generally coincide. We distinguish three principal schools of apologists, each of which is characterised by the solution it offers of the great question of the natural relations between humanity and Christianity. This is clearly the essential problem for the apologist, since his first mission is to establish a link between truth and the human soul. The method pursued and the arguments used, will vary according to the idea entertained by the apologist of the existing relations between man and revelation.

We shall find in the Church of the early ages, as indeed throughout all eras of the history of Christianity, three different solutions of this vital question. We have first, two schools radically opposed to each other; the one recognising a deep affinity between Christianity and the human conscience, the other rejecting this consoling doctrine, and affirming that every spark of the divine in the soul of man was quenched

at the Fall. The former apologists are of course anxious to show the sympathy with Christ latent in the human heart; they appeal to the aspirations of the soul and conscience, while they nevertheless clearly avow that the best desires can no more supersede revelation than hunger can take the place of the bread needed to satisfy it. The apologists of the second school seek to crush human nature down to the very dust under its burden of ignominy, to bruise and break and trample out its very life, that it may be driven by its utter wretchedness and despair to the Divine Redeemer. The school which recognises a true affinity between the soul and truth is divided into two branches: the one seeks for proofs and witnesses of this affinity in the historical development of mankind, and traces striking manifestations of it in the religions and philosophies of antiquity; the other includes all the past in one broad anathema, reviles alike philosophers and gods, and acknowledges no influence apart from Christianity but the natural instincts of the human heart.

We shall commence our exposition of the various apologies of primitive Christianity with the school which pleaded its cause with the greatest breadth of thought. Both antiquity and truth are on its side, and its writings are subscribed by the most illustrious names of the Eastern Church. The second school is headed by Tertullian, the Christian tribune. Arnobius introduces the third by heaping insults on human nature, which he vilifies with every possible epithet of opprobrium. We shall inquire what is the plan of attack and defence pursued by each school, what is the method of each, and what the use made of the various kinds of proofs,

both external and internal. Substantially the great problem remains still the same; it is a matter of supreme importance now as ever. The interest and value of such a study need no comment.

We cite as representatives of the most enlightened school of apologists, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, in the East; in the West, the names of Hippolytus and Minutius Felix alone deserve to be added to this roll of illustrious masters. Justin enunciates the principle of his school with great precision, but is not himself always faithful to it. Clement frees that principle from the restrictions which fettered it in the treatment of his predecessor; he gives it a more solid basis, handling with equal boldness and profundity the leading question—the relations of reason and faith. In Origen we find all the fruitful results of the better method handed down to him, and which he applies to the most various and delicate problems connected with the defence of the faith. With him the apology of primitive Christianity reaches its culminating point; from that time it steadily declines, and finally loses all its power and freeness. We shall especially aim to give prominence to that which is original and individual in the work of each of the defenders of the Christian faith. In substance, all use the same arguments; all set the Christian virtues in strong contrast to the vices of paganism; all dwell on the heroism of the martyrs. In order to avoid useless repetitions, we shall pass rapidly over this class of proofs, until we come to its fullest and highest expression in the work of Origen.

§ II. *The School of Liberal Apologists.*

(a.) Melito and Justin Martyr.

Melito of Sardis did more than present an eloquent petition on behalf of the Christians to Marcus Aurelius; he also wrote to the emperors, under the form of discourses, an apology which, while very concise, is animated by the true spirit of primitive Christianity, and worthy, therefore, to introduce the great school of liberal apologists.* It breathes throughout a noble confidence in the power of the truth over man. The author has no wish that truth should force its entrance into the heart by constraint; it is to make use of words as a key to unlock the cabinet.

But the true founder of the Christian apology is Justin Martyr. We have already detailed the circumstances which prepared this generous, noble thinker to apprehend and to lay down the broad and suggestive principle of that apologetic school, which he may be said to have initiated. Our task now is to examine his writings, in order to ascertain how he himself understood the principle, and in what manner he gave expression to it.†

* The fragments of Melito's Apology have been discovered by Cureton, in a Syriac MS. in the British Museum, which appears to belong to the 7th century. The text, with a Latin translation by M. Renan, is found in Vol. II. of the "Specilegium Solemnense," edited by Dom Pitra, p. 38-53.

† Beside the works already referred to upon Justin Martyr, I shall quote the recently-published work of the Abbé Freppel, entitled, "Les Apologistes du Deuxième Siècle," Paris, 1860. It contains an exposition of Justin's Apology, somewhat diffuse, and wanting in exactness on the main points. The author has inserted in his book one chapter much to be deplored, in which he endeavours to show that Justin Martyr does not claim liberty of conscience for all,

Justin, like St. John, calls the Divine and Eternal Truth, the Word. The former disciple of Plato rejoiced to find in the Gospel the philosophical language which had fascinated his youthful mind, but he truly filled the old bottle with the new wine of revelation; the Word is no longer in his eyes a mere divine idea, vague and impersonal, as in the system of Plato and of Philo. He lovingly recognises and adores in Him "the eternal and ineffable Word of God, who was made man, that by Himself sharing our sufferings, we might be healed.* Justin rises far above the fantastic world of Eons into the warm light of love; the Word is, indeed, to him, "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father."

This Word, who is not an idea, but a living person, is, nevertheless, essentially wisdom and reason—the living, eternal Reason. All creatures endowed with intelligence and free-will share in His nature; reason is a seed of the Word, a partial communication of His being. "The germ of the Word," says Justin, "is implanted in every one of the human race."† It must not be supposed that by reason, Justin intends merely the intellect; the Word is not in man, any more than in God, simply an idea; it is the source of all good as well as of all knowledge; it is the principle of the moral as well as of the intellectual life; it is the sub-

but only *the liberty of the truth.* We enter an earnest protest against this wretched sophistry, which would vindicate all the persecutions of the past.

* Τὸν ἀπὸ ἀγενήτου καὶ ἀῤῥήτου θεοῦ λόγον προσκυνοῦμεν καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν ἐπειδὴ καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς ἄνθρωπος γέγονεν. (Justin Martyr, "Apologia," II., "Opera," 51.)

† Διὰ τὸ ἔμφυτον ταυτὶ γένει ἀνθρώπων σπέρμα τοῦ λόγου. (Ibid., II. 46.)

stance of the higher life in free and responsible beings. In accordance with this view, Justin ascribes to the presence of the seed of the Word in man, all the noble actions which did honour to Greece and Rome. Righteousness sprung from the Word. All that was truly elevated in the virtues of the Stoics, and, in general, all the virtues of the ancients, emanated from Him.*

It was not possible to give clearer assertion to the doctrine of the divine parentage of the human soul, and of its natural relation to the Word. Created by Him, made in His image, and formed, in a manner, of His substance, it is united to Him by the most intimate ties. In other words, all that is truly human is divine, since it is by this participation in the nature of the Word that man is distinguished from the lower creatures. Christianity, as not a mere partial manifestation of the Word, but the complete revelation of Him, must be regarded as pre-eminently the religion of mankind. It finds indeed its primary point of contact in the higher nature of man ; it recognises itself in all the constituent elements of the moral being. In coming among us, it comes to its own, and in order to establish its titles to our confidence, it is enough for it to make fully evident this pre-established harmony between the Incarnate Word and the inner Word dwelling within us. Thus is enunciated the grand fundamental principle of the Christian apology. It is easy to recognise, in these profound views of Justin, the influence of the prologue of the Gospel of John. The beloved disciple was the first to teach this great

* Πάντας τοὺς κἂν ὁπωσδήποτε κατὰ λόγον βιοῦν σπονδάζοντας. (Justin Martyr, "Apologia," II. 46.)

doctrine of the Word. To him, as to Justin, the Word is the eternal and living manifestation of God, partially communicated in creation to every free and intelligent being, but only fully revealed and given to the world in the Incarnation. The Word is the uncreated light which lightens every man that cometh into the world, and He dwelt, full of grace and truth, with that race which, by its origin, belonged to Him. John has thus established the essential relation between the soul and revelation, between man and the Word. He may then fairly be regarded as the great creator of the Christian apology, for the sole mission of that apology is to fasten more closely the links previously existing between humanity and revelation. Proof is a thing impossible where the points of contact are wanting between the truth to be demonstrated, and the mind to be convinced. Without a fulcrum, the most powerful lever can raise nothing, and plays in empty air.

Justin having thus laid down the principle of every earnest apology, it remains for us to ascertain what application he made of it, for granted that the human soul has within it a germ of the Word, it does not follow that prior to Christianity, and outside the line of positive revelations made to one privileged portion of humanity, it should have developed this germ. It is at least possible that under the fatal influence exerted over it ever since the Fall, it may have let the germ lie idle and unfruitful, like the talent of the wicked servant in the parable. Such is not Justin Martyr's view. He admits without reservation the gravity of the Fall, and all its lamentable consequences; he even exaggerates the direct influence of the powers of darkness upon

mankind, leading man away from God; he proudly maintains the superiority of the prophets to the greatest of pagan sages; but he is nevertheless persuaded that the seed of the Word was not unfruitful in the soil of paganism, and that, owing to his divine origin, man had a presentiment or dim prevision of the highest truths of revelation. Revelation was in the ancient world in the condition of an undeveloped germ, often covered under with a parasitic vegetation of mythological legends, fostered by demoniacal influence. Nevertheless, beneath this spurious growth, still remained the immortal germ. In some pure souls of the pagan world, it had attained so beautiful a development, that Christianity may fairly claim them as her own. Justin does not hesitate to recognise as Christians, some who lived before the coming of the Redeemer. "All the truths," he says, "which philosophers and legislators have discovered and proclaimed, they derived from the Word, of whom they had caught a partial glimpse."* The doctrines of Plato are not contrary to those of Jesus Christ; we would rather say, they are not in all points in harmony with them.† So is it also with other philosophers, as, for example, the Stoics; thus is it with the poets and historians. Each has recognised partially some truth which was in harmony with his being, by the Light of the Word implanted within him, and he has well expressed it.‡ We teach that Christ is the first-born Son of God, that Word, the seed of which is in every man's heart. All who have lived conformably

* *Κατὰ λόγου μέρος.* ("Apologia," II., "Opera," 48.)

† *Οὐχ ὅτι ἀλλότριά ἐστι τὰ Πλάτωνος διδάγματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι πάντη ὅμοια.* (Ibid., II. 51.)

‡ *Ἀπο μέρους τοῦ σπρεματικοῦ θείου λόγου τὸ συγγενὲς ὁρῶν.* (Ibid.)

with the Word are Christians, even though they may have been treated as atheists; such, among the Greeks, were Socrates and Heraclitus, and, among barbarians, Abraham, Ananias, Azariah, Misraël, and Elias.* In the same manner, those who at the same period, long before Jesus Christ, lived in opposition to reason and the Word were Antichrists, that is to say, enemies to Christ, and the murderers of men who lived according to the Word or to reason. Justin thus traces back the martyrology of the truth to the earliest ages of the world. He shows that philosophers, like the Stoics, who only presented, in the midst of many inconsistencies, a very faint realisation of the fragmentary doctrine of the Word, did not escape persecution. To what ignoble treatment was not *he* subjected, whom Justin regards as the great prophet of Hellenism, the noble and courageous Socrates, whose system men were so ready to vaunt in opposition to the new religion? "When Socrates," he says, "sought by words of truth and able argument to free men from the influence of the demons, these caused him to be put to death as an atheist, sacrilegious and an innovator, by the hands of the friends of iniquity."† Justin applied to the Hellenists the terrible words spoken by Christ to the Pharisees: "Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them." Greece forgot that she had in former times slain or persecuted the illustrious philosophers in whom now she made her boast.

The apologist is not content with asserting a general

* Οἱ μετὰ λόγου βιώσαντες, χριστιανοί εἰσι· οἷον ἐν Ἕλλησι μὲν Σωκράτης καὶ Ἡράκλειτος. ("Apologia," II. 83.)

† Ibid., II. 56.

analogy between the teachings of ancient wisdom and the new religion; he shows us wherein lay this preconception of Christianity, and he frees it from the errors or superstitions by which it was darkened. The belief in immortality, in the resurrection, the expectation of a future judgment, according to which souls shall be admitted into an abode of blessedness or cast into Gehenna,—these are the capital truths which the philosophers and poets of antiquity proclamed in anticipation of Christ. Had not Plato taught that all things were created and fashioned by God, and had not the Stoics declared that the world should be consumed by fire? To find confirmation of the reprobation of idolatry expressed by Christians, it was not needful to have recourse to a philosopher. The poet Menander had said that he who makes the idol is superior to his work, and the plaudits of Greece had greeted his words. Justin carries his argument even further; he appeals not only to poetry and to philosophy, but also to the popular religion, the testimony of which he holds to be precious, rude as it is in form. He declares himself able to discover, under the confused medley of fables and myths, the anticipation of some of the most remarkable dogmas of Christianity. Why should the divinity of Christ be a stumbling-block to the pagans? Had they not gone on multiplying apotheoses, from Hercules down to the last of the Cæsars? "If we say that the Saviour of the world was born of a virgin, such an assertion can in no way shock those, who attribute an equally miraculous origin to Perseus. If the death of our God is an offence to you, why do you make mention of the death of most of the sons of

Jupiter? If the miracles of Christ seem to you too amazing, speak you no more of the marvellous cures wrought by Esculapius!"*

Justin committed the error of not explaining clearly the apologetic value of this analogy between pagan fables and Gospel history. The conclusion of his reasoning would lead to the idea that he desired simply to establish the rights of the Christians against their persecuting judges. He concludes, in fact, with these words: "Why should the name of Christ render us the objects of hatred, since we say the same things as the Greeks?"† But a more careful study will convince us that his design has a much wider scope. He wished first of all to establish that the great truths of Christianity had on their side the testimony of the human conscience, as that testimony had found expression in philosophy, and this was perfectly in accordance with his doctrine of the universal Word. He was insensibly led on to point out analogies of the same nature between the Gospel and the religion of the ancient world, but, soon shocked by the absurd fables with which he has to deal, he abandons his first idea; the thread of his reasoning breaks in his hand, and he leaves unfinished the great apology, that which establishes the ancient titles of Christianity to human credence, to return to a purely forensic defence, which is the province of the mere advocate. He should have gone further on this delicate ground; the apologist would then have discovered, even in this precursive

* "Apologia," I. 66, 67.

† Τά ὅμοια τοῖς Ἕλλησι λέγοντες, μόνοι μισούμεθα δι' ὄνομα τοῦ Χριστοῦ. (Ibid., II. 68.)

parody of the Gospel history, even in the fantastic creations of a wild mythology, the unchanging aspirations of the human heart, which anticipated, as in a dream, that which it was afterwards to receive in Jesus Christ. But for such a work, nothing less was required than the deep discerning eye of St. Paul, which could read in the inscription on the idol temple the yearning cry of the heart for God. The Christian apology was but in its infancy, and was not yet prepared to put so bold an interpretation on paganism. This was a stage of advancement ultimately to be reached at Alexandria. Justin had only for the moment indicated the use that might be made of the pagan myths; the gleam of light was too sudden and too transient to leave on his mind more than a vague perception.

We here touch on the grand imperfection of his system. His conception of Christianity is rather of a doctrinal revelation than of a divine work of redemption. Thus he misses altogether the essential difference between Christianity and all that had preceded it. Had he seen in the new religion primarily a work of reparation, the true restoration of humanity, he would have found no difficulty in distinguishing it clearly from all anterior philosophies and religions, while still holding fast the great idea, that everything in the past pointed to Christ. Between the Gospel and all antecedent systems there would then be the same relations and differences as exist between a desire and its satisfaction. Desire stretches forward to grasp its object; it makes advances towards it, cries aloud for it; but no desire, however ardent, can produce or take the place of its object. In the same manner, humanity may have had

yearnings after Christianity, may have cried aloud for it, but could not have given birth to it. Nothing can be more legitimate than an appeal to these presentiments of the soul, which testify to its inborn need of Christ, whether they be expressed in popular myths, or assume the more elevated form of philosophical systems. It is very certain that these analogies can detract nothing from the peculiar character of a religion which is essentially a fact, and a tremendous fact. The case stands differently, however, when, as with Justin, the fact becomes absorbed in the idea. The doctrine, the idea, was present, with more or less admixture of error and superstition, in the divine aspirations of mankind prior to Christianity; and the apologist who has not given to the fact all its importance, is led involuntarily to regard the new religion, as but the complement and consummation of the ancient religions and philosophies. It is in this light that Justin Martyr too often presents Christianity.

We are especially conscious of this defect in his refutation of Judaism. He cannot perceive the difference between the two Testaments, and loses himself in a maze of allegorical exegesis. To him belongs, nevertheless, the honourable distinction of being the initiator of the great Christian apology.

We pass rapidly over Athenagoras, who added nothing to the train of argument presented by Justin. The grand moral evidence to which he eloquently appeals does not fit in with the rest of his system; it seems like a stone hewn for another edifice. It does not enter into the construction of his apology, or, at least, does not occupy therein its due position. We

must look elsewhere to mark what strength and solidity it lends to the Christian apology when it is made its basis.

(b.) Clement.

With Clement we enter upon the broadest and richest apology of Christian antiquity. Learning is, in him, associated with much power of original thought; in penetration and argumentative subtlety he equals the most able of Athenian philosophers, and his large heart and vivid imagination shed warmth and brightness over all his reasoning. In his works we never find the expression of mere feeling filling up the breaches of logic; his superiority consists mainly in this, that he engages in his subject the powers of the whole man—soul and spirit, reason and conscience. We have already enumerated his works in telling the story of his life. For the present, we shall extract from them only his apology for Christianity. This divides itself naturally into two parts; the one is directed against error, the other establishes the claims of truth. The former is less original than the latter, but both bear the clear impress of a superior mind.

Interesting and valuable as is his treatment of the whole subject, we shall not now follow him over ground occupied by others, but shall devote our attention to those features of his argument which are really new and original. Clement, like Justin, starts from the deep conviction that there still exists, notwithstanding the Fall, an essential relation between God and man. He does not for a moment set the creature on a par with the Creator. He maintains the lofty barrier of

separation between the creature and the self-existent Being, and carefully guards against any possible pantheistic misconception. According to him it would be impiety to imagine that God is like unto us, and subject to the fluctuations of our changing nature. It is not possible to measure the distance between ourselves and Him; it is infinite. It would be folly to pretend that we are of the same substance; we are neither an emanation from Him, nor a part of Himself. He called us into life by a free act of His will, and our higher nature is the gift of His goodness. The divine in us is not, then, a necessary outflow of the Divine essence; it is communicated by the free act of creation; it is the bestowment of infinite love; but though thus communicated by special grace, it is none the less the inalienable privilege of man; in fact, this gift constitutes the peculiar character of the moral creature.*

The great organ of the divine element is the Word. By Him is given the manifestation of God, not only in revelation, but previously in creation. The moral life

* "Strom.," II. xvii. 74, 75. It is in this sense we interpret this difficult passage. In a former lecture the author seems to deny altogether the Divine parentage of man. But a closer examination shows that Clement was only anxious to set aside the pantheistic notion of an identity of essence between the creature and the Creator-God, as appears clearly from the passage in which he establishes that we are not the constituent elements of Deity: *μήτε μορίων ὄντων αὐτοῦ.* ("Strom.," II. xvii. 75.) He has certainly given most sweeping expression to his idea in the passage of which we are speaking. It must be explained and modified by the general principles of his system. It is evident that he simply wished to establish the theory of a free creation, in opposition to that of emanation. "We are," he says, "the workmanship of the Divine freedom." (*Μόνῳ τῷ ἔργον εἶναι τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ.*)

of man is a radiation from the uncreated light. Clement gives an original and poetical form to his thoughts, though surcharged with erudite allusions, in the commencement of his discourse to the Greeks. He compares the influence of the Word upon human passions held in control by Him, to that of Orpheus over the wild beasts, who lost their fierceness at the harmonious accents of his voice. The Son of God, having descended from a higher world, caused the earth to hear a new song, which entranced while it calmed those who listened to it. The Gospel revelation was not, however, the first anthem of the Word.* "When He established the beautiful ordinances of the universe, bringing all its elements into harmony, he drew forth a glorious symphony which filled the world with music.† This is an immortal song; it is the concert of beings, all in true accord: from the beginning to the end all take up the strain. This music of the universe is not regulated by Orphic measures, but by the Divine measure, according to which David modulated his psalms.‡ Creation and revelation answer each other in the praise of their Author. But in this concert of creation the sweeter lyre of the Word, that on which his hands delight to play, is not the inanimate and insensible world: it is man. In him the sweet accord comes from the union between soul and body. Brought into harmony by the Divine Spirit, his whole being makes sweet music unto God."

Clement carries out to their full issues these exalted

* "Protrept.," I. 2.

† *Ἵνα δὴ ὅλος ὁ κόσμος αὐτῷ ἁρμονία γενηταί.* (Ibid., I. 5.)

‡ *Ἡρμόσατο τὸ πᾶν, οὐ κατὰ τὴν θρᾴκιου μουσικὴν, κατὰ δὲ τὴν πάτριου τοῦ θεοῦ βούλησιν, ἣν ἐζήλωσε Δαβίδ.* (Ibid.)

views of human nature, but without falling into exaggeration. If it is true that man is distinguished from other beings by that which is divine in him, by that which the Word has communicated to him of His own essence, it is evident that the truly human and the truly divine are one. The more man develops the higher life within him, which he derives from the Eternal Word, the more truly he will be man, that is, the privileged creature of the Almighty. Thus, for him to violate the moral law, is not only to offend the Word, by whom it was engraven on his heart and who lives in it ;* it is also to degrade his own nature ; he renounces his place in humanity by breaking the link which unites him to God, and falls into the condition of the mere animal. "He," says Clement, "who sins against divine reason, or the Word, is no longer a rational being ; he is an animal deprived of reason, the slave of his desires."† It follows from all these considerations that so far from there being any opposition between true nature and revelation, there is between them an original and necessary harmony. This being established, Clement can prove without difficulty that the most divine religion is also the most human.

The apologist is not satisfied with stating as a principle, the agreement subsisting between man and the Word. He seeks to demonstrate that man, in his actual condition, is constituted for the Word as the Word is historically manifested in Christianity; and here commences his apology, properly so called, for the

* "Pædag.," I. xiii. § 101.

† Οὐ γάρ ἐστι λογικὸς ἔτι ὁ παρὰ λόγον ἁμαρτάνων, θηρίον δὲ ἄλογον. (Ibid.)

new religion. If, in fact, it is proved that revelation satisfies the heart and the mind, its titles to our confidence ought to be deemed sufficient, and we have but to accept it. All assurance ultimately rests upon a correspondence of the soul or spirit with the order of truth, which we are to appropriate. So long as this relation is not established, there may be blind submission, enforced adherence, but there is no conviction; the requisite evidence is wanting. Now that which is not proved, is to the mind as though it had no existence. Such are the general laws of certainty. Clement accepts them in their integrity; he asks no privilege, no immunity, because he well knows that anything that might seem to be gained by such means would ultimately prove loss. He undertakes to show that the certainty of the Christian is a genuine assurance, obtained by legitimate methods and in conformity with the unalterable laws which govern the world of mind. His task will not be an easy one, for like all the defenders of Christianity, he will have to combat deeply rooted prejudices. In truth, the representatives of purely human philosophy compassionate the disciples of Christ. They maintain a radical opposition between reason and faith, as if reason was always enlightened and faith blind. To hear them, one might suppose reason to be the peculium of their school; that it would be sought for in vain beyond the limits of their systems, and that the faith of the Christians is simple irrationality. Such estimates are formed on a basis of idle prejudice. This Clement is about to show in treating the great question of the relations of reason and faith, with a depth and strength of argument which have not

yet been surpassed. The boldness of his apologetic method has often prevented his being even understood.

He refutes, in the first place, the notion that Christianity sacrifices reason to faith. The two are, as he represents, two modes of gaining knowledge which supplement each other, and which are both legitimate and indispensable, each in its own sphere. Intelligence is a gift of God of which we are to make habitual use;* but reason, left to itself, does not communicate the substance of truth, those first principles which constitute the essence of religion. The method by which we rise to the apprehension of these principles is at once more elevated and more rapid than any which reason teaches us. Reason, however, is not less called into exercise to enable us to trace back consequences to their premises, or to follow out premises to their final conclusions; it alone unrolls before our eyes the serried lines of argument. It is reason, also, which enables us to distinguish the analogies and differences of things, even to their finest shades, and which teaches us to avoid that vague indeterminateness of expression which is so dangerous and so fertile in errors, even when treating of the sacred texts.† Logic, that lawgiver of the world of thought, lends very precious aid to the Christian. After all, speech is an act, and it is of moment that this act should be in conformity with reason and with the right.‡ Thus regarded, logic is, as it were, the morality of language, but it has a yet more elevated part to perform; beneath the word it discerns the

* Τὴν σύνεσιν θεόπεμπτον. ("Strom.," V. viii. § 62.)

† Ibid., VI. x. § 82.

‡ Οὐχὶ καὶ τὸ λέγειν ἔργον ἐστί; (Ibid., I. ix. § 45.)

thought, and teaches us to ascend from the particular to the general, to group and distinguish ideas.* This noble science is as a rampart which impedes the progress of the sophists, and prevents them from trampling on the truth.† It is therefore very necessary that he who will sustain the cause of God, should be versed in philosophical studies. All human sciences may bring their tribute to Christianity; it will borrow from each, weapons for the defence of its cause, and will regard all as potent auxiliaries to be arrayed under its standard.‡ This breadth of view was a source of perpetual apprehension to timid Christians, who would gladly have placed a deep gulf between Christianity and the wisdom of the ancients. Clement, as he unfolded these grand views of truth, heard the displeased murmurs of the bigoted and narrow party, ever ready to condemn that which passes its comprehension. We feel, from the emphasis with which he speaks, that he had been irritated by the clamour of those who, in the pride of ignorance, reviled the superior knowledge which they could not attain, and chafed under a galling sense of hopeless inferiority. "There are men," says Clement ironically, "so admirably endowed, that they think they have nothing to do with philosophy, logic, or even the study of nature, but that pure and simple faith is all-sufficient."§ Thus to despise knowledge is to seek to enjoy the fruit of the vine without taking the pains to cultivate it. Human

* "Strom.," I. ix. § 44.

† *Οἷον θριγκός ἐστι διαλεκτικὴ ὡς μὴ καταπατεῖσθαι πρὸς τῶν σοφιστῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν.* (Ibid., VI. x. § 81.)

‡ Ibid., VI. x. § 82.

§ *Μόνην καὶ ψιλὴν τὴν πίστιν ἀπαιτοῦσιν.* (Ibid., I. ix. § 43.)

knowledge does not plant the heavenly vine; we do not owe to it the stock whence we derive life and sap; nevertheless, by assiduous cultivation, it promotes the fruitfulness of the vine.* If the soul grasps the essence of truth in an instant by intuition, it does not follow that the development of the thought is to no purpose; just as education strikes from our hearts the sparks of truth placed there by God, so does science develop all the treasures of faith. To the objection that ignorance itself can comprehend the Gospel, Clement nobly replies, that the Christian knows not only how to live in poverty, but also in wealth.† None, after all, dispense entirely with logic, and those who emphatically assume the name of the orthodox, make use of philosophy unwittingly every time they speak reasonably.‡ It is idle to lay a ban on mental culture and free inquiry, and to appeal only to the simplicity of the faith. Clement urges that God has spoken to man in very various ways, and that it is not so simple and so easy as men think to exhaust the riches of a revelation which is, like its Author, infinite.§ The narrow-minded fear philosophy as children fear ghosts.‖ They are afraid, they say, that it will lead them astray, and destroy their faith. In that case they have not much to lose. "If their faith, I do not say their knowledge, is of such a kind, that it is at the mercy of a mere trick of words, then let them lose it,¶ for their base fear proves clearly

* "Strom.," I. ix. § 43. † Ibid., I. vi. § 31.

‡ Οἱ ὀρθοδόξασται καλούμενοι. (Ibid., I. ix. § 45.)

§ Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως λαλήσας, οὐχ ἁπλῶς γνωρίζεται. (Ibid., VI. x. § 81.)

‖ Καθάπερ οἱ παῖδες τὰ μορμολύκεια. (Ibid., VI. x. § 80.)

¶ Λυθήτω. (Ibid., IV. x. § 81.)

that what they think they possess is not the truth. Truth is invincible; error alone is soon dissipated. Whoever confesses that he is wavering in his faith, avows by that confession that he has neither the touch-stone of the money-changer, nor the criterion of truth."* What right has he to sit at that table where pieces of money of every sort are presented, if he cannot distinguish between the true and the false? The righteous, says David, shall stand fast for ever. Nothing can move him; he possesses the incorruptible inheritance, and is so much the more secure against the subtleties of language if he has not despised the study of logic, and can but use skill so acquired in detecting sophistries.

The supposed opposition between reason and faith thus falls to the ground, but only if it is well understood that reason shall restrict itself within its own domain, and shall not claim the power of revealing first principles. Reason does not produce truth as a tree produces its fruit; its province is neither to invent nor to discover, but simply to receive truth; all its toil would be in vain, if it did not receive from a higher power the materials upon which it may usefully work. That higher power is faith. Let it not be said that Christianity, by assuming this ground, places itself outside the conditions of a rational doctrine, and claims a blind assent. On the contrary, it remains faithful to the universal laws of knowledge. All science commences with an act of faith, that is to say, by a direct intuition of the first principles upon which it rests. It is not by the long and winding path of logic

* "Strom.," VI. x. § 81.

that first truths are reached; they present themselves to the mind, impress themselves upon it. Indisputable axioms are not the results of discussion, for, in that case, discussion might undo its own work. Evidence on any subject proceeds therefore first of all from faith, for what is faith but the sudden intuition by which truth is presented to, and grasped by, the mind?

The representatives of human science most opposed to Christianity, are bound to admit the lawfulness of such a method. Epicurus calls faith an anticipation of the mind, that is to say, a spontaneous movement of thought towards that which is evident, or a lively perception of the evidence.* According to him, any demonstration is impossible without this anticipation of the truth, which precedes its logical development. Aristotle expressed the same idea when he said that the test of truth is faith; † and the divine Plato declared, in the book of the law, that he is happy who is made from the beginning a participant of the truth. This direct participation is, in his view, the royal road to truth.‡

It must not be imagined that faith initiates us into the spiritual world alone. Those who neglect faith will be as unable to comprehend nature as grace. He who will believe in nothing but a sensible experience or logical demonstration, placing his finger as it were on that which can be grasped and felt, will perceive only the grosser elements of the world; he confounds matter

* Πρόληψιν εἶναι διανοίας τὴν πίστιν. ("Strom.," II. iv. § 16.)
† Ibid., II. iv. § 15.
‡ Ἡ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ βασιλέως ἐπιστήμη βασιλικὴ. (Ibid., II. iv. § 18.)

and spirit, the creation and the Creator. The first principle eludes him under the multiplicity of its manifestations; and thus it will be, until by faith—that is, by direct intuition—he rises to the simple, universal principle, which is separable and quite distinct from matter itself.* It must be freely admitted, then, that first causes are above demonstration; faith alone enables us to perceive them in the domain of nature or of grace. Leaving behind the mere evidence of the senses, and rising far above all mere opinion, faith hastens into the presence of absolute truth, and rests in the light.† Feeling or intuition is the introduction to science.‡

If these principles are true, even in relation to the science of the visible, how much more so in relation to the science of the divine and invisible! Here pre-eminently feeling must play a leading part, and faith must be manifestly the first condition of all knowledge. Human wisdom, however lofty its range, cannot attain to God. The mystery of His being is profound and impenetrable. He is represented by that cloud from the midst of which came the thunder of His voice on Sinai. Thus was Moses led to exclaim, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." But the God who is thus raised immeasurably above us by His uncreated essence, is brought near to our hearts by His love. "His divine power is ever ready to reveal itself to us in blessing and teaching." He imparts Himself to man simply through the medium of faith; this faith,

* Τὸ ἁπλοῦν ὅ οὔτε σὺν ὕλῃ ἐστίν. ("Strom.," II. iv. § 14.)

† Ἡ πίστις δὲ διὰ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ὁδεύσασα πρὸς τὰ ἀψευδῆ σπεύδει. (Ibid.)

‡ Ἡ μὲν αἴσθησις ἐπιβάθρα τῆς ἐπιστήμης. (Ibid.)

treated as folly by the Greeks, is the direct reception of the truth, antecedent to any demonstration; it is the assurance of faith, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* It rests not on material proof, since it is the communication to the soul of that which is immaterial and divine. "Thus the spirit, rising above all worlds, above all the spheres of creation, enters the lofty region where dwells the Lord of all worlds; it is no more in danger of having its beliefs carried about with every wind of doctrine, like dead or fallen leaves tossed by the tempest; it has arrived at the immutable by a way which is itself immutable."†

We are not to suppose, however, that the intuition of faith is entirely a passive thing, and that man has merely to wait for divine illumination without using any effort of the will. Undoubtedly, grace plays an important part in the regeneration of man; God is the maker both of the light we are to perceive and of the outward eye that perceives it. It is He who, knowing our inability to conceive of the Absolute Being, has sent a Divine Master to reveal to us the ineffable mysteries of His nature. Our feebleness is such, that even under His direction we see but imperfectly. Thus we have the greatest need of the divine grace, which is, happily, infinite in its fulness and freeness.‡ Nevertheless, it is unalterably sure that God requires our concurrence, our efforts. He grants eternal salva-

* "Strom.," II. ii. § 5.

† Ὄντως γὰρ ἀτρέπτως πρὸς τὸ ἄτρεπτον ἡ προσαγωγή. (Ibid., II. xi. § 51.)

‡ Ἠσθένει πρὸς κατάληψιν τῶν ὄντων ἡ ψυχή . . . . μάλιστα χρῄζομεν χάριτος. (Ibid., V. i. § 7.)

tion to those who labour with Him for the development within themselves of knowledge and holiness.* We must be like that gladiator who said to Jupiter: "If I have fitly prepared myself for the combat, give me the victory." Faith, that first triumph of the Christian, is obtained only at this price; for the pure in heart shall alone see God.

Clement thus allots an important part to the will in the attainment of certainty in religion; the share which he ascribes to moral determination as influencing our beliefs, is one of the most remarkable features of his apology. Like is only perceived by like; man, therefore, will only arrive at the direct intuition of God, when he shall have truly drawn nigh to God and put away evil. "Just as when the soil is barren the seed sown is useless, so the best teaching bears no fruit without the consent of him who receives it. The dry straw, which is easily inflammable, catches fire at the first spark. The magnet attracts the iron because of their affinity for each other."† It follows that religious truth will only attract us when it acts upon us like a sacred magnet. We must have ears to hear, and eyes to see. "It is with a new eye, with a new ear, and a new heart, that the new things revealed by Christ are seen and heard."‡ The natural man has no perception of them; they are to him like those black ashes, which, in the prophetic image, are cast forth from the dark cloud in which God had enshrouded Himself; but, on the other hand, these very same oracles are to the

* Σωτηρίαν τοῖς συνεργοῦσι πρὸς γνῶσιν. ("Strom.," VII. vii. § 48.)

† Ἡ λίθος ἡ θρυλουμένη ἕλκει τὸν σίδηρον διὰ συγγένειαν. (Ibid., II. vi. § 26.)

‡ Καινῷ ὀφθαλμῷ, καινῇ ἀκοῇ, καινῇ καρδίᾳ. (Ibid., II. iv. § 15.)

believer full of light and truth.* "The way of the wicked is as darkness," saith the Scripture, to teach that the path of pride can never lead to knowledge.

Faith, like unbelief, has a moral cause. The soul sees only when it desires to see, hears only when it wills to hear. At the basis of belief is an act of the will, which brings out the affinity between man and God. This act is possible, not only because divine grace is largely bestowed upon us, but also because, according to Clement's doctrine, a germ of the Word is hidden deep in every human breast. We are in discord or in harmony with religious truth, in the measure in which we have cultivated it; the greater or less development of the divine element within us, depends on our moral attitude towards it. The part thus assigned to human freedom runs through all the stages of faith. Faith commences with an aspiration after the light, a yearning after the highest truth. This desire implies an initial act of the will. "The beginning of wisdom is the desire to seek after that which is useful. A settled determination is therefore of great weight in the acquisition of truth.† It is in this sense that voluntary faith is the basis of our salvation."‡ The will leads the way, for the rational faculties do but obey the will. What thou wilt, thou canst! Faith and obedience depend on ourselves.§ "Ask, and ye shall receive." In its essence, the act of faith is an act of obedience, and it manifests itself, first of all, in earnest inquiry.

* "Strom.," VI. xv. § 116.

† Μεγάλην γοῦν εἰς γνῶσιν ῥοπὴν ἀπερίσπαστος παρέχει προαίρεσις. (Ibid., II. ii. § 9.)

‡ Ibid., II. iii. § 11.

§ Τὸ πιστεύειν τε καὶ πείθεσθαι ἐφ' ἡμῖν. (Ibid., VII. iii. § 16.)

The living spark received into the soul needs to be fanned into a flame,* and that idle curiosity must be avoided which would lead the soul merely to walk up and down in the truth, as men walk up and down in a town to admire its buildings.† The first thing which men demand of the sun, is not dazzling brightness; the first thing they want is warmth and life. So should it be with us and the Sun of the soul. Clement assigns a moral cause to every species of unbelief. To the pagans he says: "You *will* not free yourselves from the passions which are the diseases of the soul, nor from sin, which is the soul's everlasting death."‡ Man can only arrive at truth after he has purified his soul and placed himself among the violent, who take the kingdom of heaven by force, not by philosophic reasonings, but by the repudiation of evil and by perseverance in the holy war of good.§ Thus is the conformity of the soul to God developed; the soul attains to the love which is the crown of Christian virtue, and by means of this conformity it is enabled to apprehend Him who is love.¶ "God is love; He gives Himself to those who love Him. The soul must be joined to Him by divine love."** Over the temple of truth, as over the temple of Epidaurus, might be read an inscription in these words: "He who would enter this sanctuary must be pure." All the steps of knowledge are ascended in the same manner. "Love, in man, blends with love in God, and in this love perfect unity is established between Him who

* "Strom.," VI. xvii. § 149.

† "Ωσπερ τῶν πόλεων τὰ οἰκοδομήματα. (Ibid., I. i. § 6.)

‡ "Protrept.," XI. § "Strom.," V. iii. § 16. ¶ Ibid., V. iii. § 7.

** Χρὴ ἐξοικειοῦσθαι ἡμᾶς αὐτῷ δι' ἀγάπης τῆς θείας. (Ibid., V. i. § 13.)

knows and him who is known."* Having reached this point, we have attained to the vision of spirit by spirit.† We are bound by faith to the truth, as by the song of a sacred syren, from which we cannot free our soul.‡ By faith we arrive at comprehension and systematic knowledge. Christian theology grows out of elementary faith, as a noble tree springs from the acorn sown in the earth, for the faith of the humble-hearted, so far from laying a restraint upon the free exercise of thought, raises the mind to the luminous heights, from whence this world and another are beheld as one grand and august whole. We shall see, when we come to give the views of Clement on theology, properly so called, in the exposition of his dogmatic system, that the lowliness of the starting-point in no way hindered the free and bold development of his thoughts. So far from establishing a marked opposition between reason and faith, he regards both as different manifestations of one and the same intellectual and moral power, as is proved by the following passage: "Wisdom changes its name according to its diversified applications.§ When it deals with first causes it is called intelligence; it becomes science when it reinforces intelligence by logic; and it becomes faith when, concentrated upon divine things, it apprehends the primeval Word, without yet beholding Him face to face, and while still remaining under the ordinary conditions of the human mind."

The demonstration of Christianity on the ground of

* *Ἐνθένδε ἤδε φίλον φίλῳ τὸ γιγνῶσκον τῷ γιγνωσκομένῳ παρίστησιν.* ("Strom.," VII. x. § 57.)

† *Τῷ νῷ ὁρᾷ τὰ νοητά.* (Ibid., V. iii. § 16.) ‡ Ibid., II. ii. § 9.

§ *Πολυμερὴς δὲ οὖσα ἡ φρόνησις μεταβάλλει τὴν προσηγορίαν.* (Ibid., V. xvii. § 155.)

the fundamental principle laid down by Clement, is very brief, and requires no great array of logical argument. When it is once granted that religious truth is perceived by faith, that is to say, by the direct intuition of the soul, of what avail are lengthened arguments? Clement would be untrue to his own principle, and would abandon his own method, were he to make use of such. The course to be pursued is not so much to give demonstration of the truth as to set it forth, to present it to the soul and the conscience, that it may appeal to the divine element which is in man, and influence his will. Light will spring, as it were, from the contact of the divine within and the divine without and above him; evidence will result from the conjunction of the inner truth, which is fragmentary and partial, with the whole truth, which the Gospel presents to man. Religious certainty is, in short, simply the response of the Word to the Word; the Word within, beholding itself revealed in all its fulness and glory in Jesus Christ. The task of the apologist will therefore be accomplished when he has fully set forth the person of the Redeemer, and established that He was, indeed, the Desire of all nations, the object of universal aspiration. If his simple and telling statements make it plain that the soul of man, in all its higher instincts, cries aloud for Him, and in Him alone finds the satisfaction of its purest and best desires, the demonstration will be complete. It will be irresistible, at least to the upright and honest heart, which, instead of loving the darkness because its deeds are evil and must needs be hidden in obscurity, comes to the light. Thus is wisdom justified of her children, and those alone arrive at truth

who are of the truth, or rather, who have allowed grace to quicken within them this divine relationship. We admit this is reasoning in a circle, since to those only is the proof conclusive, who were in a measure convinced before; but the whole of Christianity moves in such a circle. We shall be slow in reproaching Clement with treading, in this respect, in the footsteps of St. Paul, St. John, and of Christ Himself.

It follows from these considerations that the great task of the apologist is to place man face to face with truth; his pleading will be simply a powerful affirmation, for the confirmation of which he will appeal to the universal and spontaneous testimony of the human conscience. The basis of his apology being once firmly laid down, Clement has but two things to do. He will first declare the revelation of God, or rather set before his contemporaries the living person of Christ; then he will show, by the history of the ancient world, that in Him is to be found the realisation of the religious ideal, vainly sought through so many ages.

Clement appeals perpetually to the Holy Scriptures, in evidence of the divine truth which he proposes for the acceptance of the heart. He does not, indeed, cite the adversaries of Christianity before a tribunal of which they do not recognise the authority; he does not say to the Greek, who has no faith in the book of God, "Bow thy reason before these sacred pages." He does not proclaim in an oracular tone, "It is written!" Nor does he seek to compel implicit submission by insisting on the miraculous character of the Scriptures, on the fulfilment of prophecy, or on the miracles wrought by the inspired writers. This would be to carry the wit-

ness of the higher and invisible sphere into the lower sphere of the visible; it would be to abandon moral intuitions, and to deprive conviction of its character of an act of obedience and submission to God. Such evidences may carry the mind along with them, but they have no decisive power over it, so fertile is the intellect in sophistries, and so skilful in evading the force of argument. In any case such proofs have no power over the heart; they may sometimes produce a cold and dead conviction; they will never give assurance and certainty. Men believe in the Bible in the same way in which they believe in God, whose word it is; the divine element, which shines forth in its sacred pages, must be apprehended by the moral intuition, not by the mere intellect.

These are clearly the views of Clement with reference to Scripture evidence. First principles, he repeats over and over again, are beyond the reach of reasoning; they must be perceived by direct intuition, that is, by faith. Now, the basis of religious truth is the Word speaking by His prophets, evangelists, and holy apostles. The divinity of the Scripture message must, therefore, be placed among those first principles which are above demonstration, and which must be arrived at directly; the soul believes in it by impulse and by instinct, as it believes in the Word, of whose thoughts the sacred books are the expression, and whose gracious voice they in a manner bring to the ear of man.* In other words, the Scriptures do not lead to Christ, but

* Ἔχομεν γὰρ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς διδασκαλίας τὸν κύριον διὰ τῶν προφητῶν διά τε τοῦ εὐαγγελίου καὶ διὰ τῶν μακαρίων ἀποστόλων. ("Strom.," VII. xvi. § 95.)

Christ leads to the Scriptures. It is because He speaks in them, and we recognise His gentle accents, that they are invested for us with the highest authority, and become our universal criterion of truth. He who by the inner sense has heard the voice of God in these sacred pages, believes in them with a settled faith, which nothing can overthrow.* What is, then, the course to be pursued to convince men of the divinity of the Scriptures? There is but one thing needful—that their eyes be opened; the pure in heart will then behold God in His word. Clement does not appeal to any of the passages quoted from the Scriptures as to an oracle conclusive in every dispute with the unbelieving. He is anxious rather to essay the power of the Holy Book over the hearts of his adversaries, and he repeats in their hearing those sacred words, which, "outwardly simple and unadorned, are yet full of an inner beauty, which are incapable of flattering, and yet raise the man whose moral being is choked with sin, heal his wickedness with one sovereign word, and draw him towards the salvation offered to him." † The apologist quotes by preference the Gospel precepts, which set before us so lofty a moral ideal, because he is sure beforehand that conscience will give its assent to such words as these: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." He thus sums up the whole teaching of Scripture: "Hear what saith the mouth of the Lord, the Holy

* Ὁ πιστεύσας τοίνυν ταῖς γραφαῖς ἀπόδειξιν ἀναντίῤῥητον τὴν τοῦ τὰς γραφὰς δεδωρημένου φωνὴν λαμβάνει θεοῦ. ("Strom.," II. ii. § 9.)

† Μίᾳ καὶ τῇ αὐτῇ φωνῇ πολλὰ θεραπευουσαι. ("Protrept.," VIII. 77.)

Spirit: 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' What great love has He not shown for mankind! The Heavenly Teacher speaks to you as His disciples; the Master speaks to you not as to servants, not as a God to men, but as a tender father addressing his children. . . . Moses said, when he only heard the Word spoken of, 'I tremble exceedingly, and quake,' and you who hear the Word Himself speak, shall you not tremble? . . . Come, my sons, He saith, if you become not as little children, if you are not born again, the Scripture tells you, ye cannot come back to your true Father.* Faith will introduce you, experience will be your guide, and thus you will enter the school of Scripture. Its teachings are for those who have already received in simplicity the question, What man is he that desireth life?" †

It is faith in the Word, then, which brings us into submission under the sacred yoke of the Scriptures. It is not the authority of the Book which brings us to the feet of Christ; but the Book, overflowing with the life of the Word, imparts that life to us, when by the moral intuition we have heard the voice of God in His inspired pages, and this initial act of faith has been confirmed by experience. To use a rude but exact simile, all the value of the vessel comes from that which it holds, and if Clement is clear in his faith in inspiration, he never, as we shall presently see, confounds revelation itself with the writings which contain

* "Protrept.," IX. 82.

† Ἡ πίστις εἴσαξει, ἡ πείρα διδάξει, ἡ γραφὴ παιδαγωγήσει. (Ibid., IX. 88.)

it; he perpetually carries us back from the Book to the living person of the Redeemer. Everything centres in the God-Man, and Clement, in strains of truly noble language, seeks to make us directly acquainted with Him. "This eternal Jesus," he says, "this great and sole High-priest of the one God who is His Father, prays for all men, and upon earth He ceases not to exhort them. 'Oh, all ye nations, hearken unto me!' He cries. 'Whosoever you are, endowed with reason, Greeks or barbarians, hearken. My words are to that whole race of man whom I created by the will of the Father. Come unto me, and take upon you the law of the one God and of His word. Be not content to be distinguished from other creatures by reason alone; to you only of beings of mortal birth do I give immortality. I wait, yea, I wait to impart to you this precious gift; of my bounteousness I will bestow on you an incorruptible life. I give unto you the Word, that is to say, the knowledge of God; I give myself to you.* I am verily that Word, the chosen of God, the steward of the Father, the Eternal Son, the Anointed One, the mind of God, His arm, His might, His will. You even now reflect my glory, though dimly and partially. Now I come to reform you in mine image, that you may be like unto me. I will anoint you with the precious ointment of faith, and by its virtue you shall not see corruption. I will show you without a veil the image of righteousness, that you may rise to God. 'All ye that are weary and heavy laden, come unto me, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find

* Τέλειον ἐμαυτὸν χαρίζομαι. ("Protrept.," XII. 120.)

rest unto your souls.'"* Clement reproduces the same thoughts in an inexhaustible variety of forms, but always clothed in brilliant and subtle language, full of erudite allusions, as is his wont. He is never weary of representing the Word in His double office of Creator and Saviour, depositing in man the germ of the whole higher life, and Himself coming to quicken and fertilise this germ, when it was on the verge of losing all vitality. True to the generous principles of his apology, he rests satisfied with stating and presenting these great truths to the soul, well assured that if the soul is upright, and has preserved its sense of the divine, it will apprehend them by faith, and appropriate them by a direct intuition.

In order to facilitate this appropriation, however, Clement seeks to show from history that the revelation of the Word does truly answer all the aspirations of humanity, as they have manifested themselves in the high culture of antiquity. He no longer seeks to establish only the relationship of man to God; he seeks to show further, that Jesus Christ has been the Desire of all nations. If he finds that mankind in general has sought, pursued, demanded, just that which revelation brings to him, this will be an unanswerable proof that the Gospel is indeed the truth—that truth the presentiment or germ of which exists originally in the conscience. Deeply convinced that God (to use one of Clement's favourite expressions) loves not a mere fraction of humanity, but human nature in itself, Clement delights to trace the progress of preparation for the Gospel in the midst of paganism. He does not,

* "Protrept.," XII. 120.

indeed, place Judaism and Hellenism on a par. We have seen him in his polemics against the philosophers, bringing down the pride of Greece in comparing her with nations whom she accounted barbarous; we have seen how he even accuses her of plagiarism, and of borrowing from foreign sources the best fruits of her civilisation. On the other hand, he recognises a spontaneous development of the conscience among pagan nations, while still maintaining the superiority of the people, who, in lieu of philosophers, had prophets, and to whom were committed the oracles of God. Clement had not the occasion of holding discussions with the Jews; with them, therefore, he concerns himself very little. He is the apologist of the Gentiles, the apostle of cultivated Greece, and he pleads the cause of Christ before an ideal Areopagus, on which are seated as judges all the great philosophers of antiquity. He speaks their language, he meets them on their own ground of religious and moral development, that he may lead them into the whole truth. Thus he is much more engaged with the preparation for the Gospel in paganism than in Hebrew prophecy, for which, nevertheless, he always manifests the deepest respect. He has represented, by a beautiful image, the idea of the preparatory mission of the Greek philosophy, and at the same time, of its inferiority to the Hebraic revelation. He says: "As the holy oil flowed from the beard of Aaron down to the skirts of his garments, so the divine unction of the truth which the Word—our eternal High-priest—poured, first of all, upon the head of the chosen people, flows even down to the philosophy of the Greeks. That philosophy was

doubtless a far fainter expression of the Word than was prophecy, but by all its elements of truth it belongs to that Word. How can we doubt that it is fulfilling His designs,* since it contributes to the preparation for His kingdom; under this condition, however, that it shall not be too proud to receive from a barbarous people that wisdom which is to guide it into all truth." The philosophic faculty, like all the faculties of the human mind, is a gift of God bestowed by a special operation of His providence.† He who made the prophets made the philosophers also; His merciful wisdom manifests itself in ways infinitely various, but which all tend to the salvation of man.‡ All that the arts contain of good proceeds from God.§ How, then, should this art of philosophy, which is the noblest of all, since it directly serves the cause of truth, have another origin? God has not only bestowed the philosophic faculty, but He has also watched over its exercise.‖ He has taken care that the philosophers should make good use of it, and thus contribute to the welfare and salvation of mankind. His watchful providence is specially over those elect spirits who, by their high endowments, will exert the greatest influence over their kind. These are the leaders of the people, the formers of mind, whose vocation it is to make manifest the beneficent operation of God in the government or in

* *Φιλοσοφία δὲ πῶς οὐκ ἐν λόγῳ;* ("Strom.," VI. xvii. § 153.)

† *Ἔχουσι τι οἰκεῖον φύσεως ἰδίωμα οἱ σοφοὶ τῇ διανοίᾳ, λαμβάνουσι δὲ πνεῦμα αἰσθήσεως παρὰ τῆς κυριωτάτης, σοφίας.* (Ibid., I. iv. § 26.)

‡ *Τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτροπῶς . . . διὰ ἐπιστήμης, διὰ προφητείας, τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἐνδεικνυμένην δύναμιν εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν αὐεργεσίαν.* (Ibid., I. iv. § 27.)

§ *Τὰ ἐν τέχναις ἀγαθὰ, θεόθεν ἔχει τὴν ἀρχήν.* (Ibid., VI. xvii. § 160.)

‖ Ibid., VI. xvii. § 157.

the instruction of the world. Let it not be said that philosophy is a demoniacal invention.* Evil cannot bring forth good; darkness cannot produce light; philosophy which has been a fountain of good cannot be of the Evil One, but is of God.† If we except the sophists, who have profaned the name of philosophy, it will be admitted that its representatives have been the most virtuous men of Greece and Rome.‡ Let us not then suffer it to be likened to the strange woman in the Proverbs, who lays snares for the feet of the young, and whose dwelling leads down to death. No; philosophy is no harlot;§ it is with her as with Tamar, who, though she was arrayed like a vile woman, and might be mistaken for such, nevertheless truly belonged to the house of Israel.‖

This great apology, then, starting from the essential affinity between man and God, goes on to show how, in Christianity, we have the complete restoration of the normal relation between the creature and the Creator. It finds in the divine element, which, partial and obscured, survives the fall in man, the fulcrum with which to raise us to that fulness of the Deity to which we are destined, and which the Word has come to impart. Inexorable in its declaration of the corruption of fallen man, but as tender as inexorable, it never takes pleasure in degrading human nature, and finds no cause of triumph in its deep abasement. It needs

* Μάλιστα τούτοις σύνεστι προσιεχεστέρα ἡ ἐπισκοπὴ, ὅσοι δυνατοὶ τὰ πλήθη συνωφελεῖν ὑπάρχουσιν οὗτοι δ' εἰσὶν οἱ ηγεμονικοὶ καὶ παιδευτικοί. ("Strom.," VI. xvii. § 158.)

† Οὐ τοίνυν κακίας ἔργον ἡ φιλοσοφία ἐναρέτους ποιοῦσα. (Ibid., VI. xvii. § 159.)

‡ Ἡ χρῆσις τῆς φίλοσοφίας, οὐκ ἔστιν ἂν κακῶν, ἀλλ' ἢ τοῖς ἀρίστοις τῶν Ἑλλήνων δέδοται. (Ibid., VI. xvii. § 159.)

§ Ibid., I. v. § 29. ‖ Ibid., I. vi. § 31.

and cherishes the feeble spark in the smoking flax, and respects in the bruised reed a divine plant which may be raised, which must not be broken. We are not blind to the blemishes in Clement's apology. We note his inconsistencies, we blame his excessive idealism, and among minor faults we observe the singular turn of his phraseology, that combination of too great brilliance in the form with obscurity in the thought, which makes his treatises difficult to read. Of him we may say, what is true of philosophy in general: to taste the sweet kernel, it is needful to break the shell. Our readers can form very little idea of the confusion to be met with in his writings, because we have only quoted some of his finest passages, without following him through the many involutions of his style. Yet, in spite of all these grave defects, Clement is the true founder of the great apology, that which is sure and safe in its conclusions, because it gives truth a basis wide enough to build upon, and supplies the fulcrum for the lever. That which was only a passing flash of genius in Justin, becomes, under the hands of Clement, the organising principle of a great system. Certainty in religion is made to rest upon the normal conditions of all certainty; it is based upon a real relation between man and truth; this relation is determined by the very value of the object of faith. Now, as this object is God, the Cause of causes, it is legitimate that it should be apprehended, like every first cause, by moral intuition. It is rational that reason should recognise its own limits, and leave to the intuitive faculties and moral determinations, the perception of super-sensible and divine truths. By doing this it loses nothing,

for within its own sphere it has a very important mission; it is the lawgiver of the world of thought. Starting from these premises, Clement of Alexandria, by an erudite and able course of argument, refutes all that has opposed itself to Christianity in the past, and discerns all that in the old world was in harmony with the new. Thus he establishes the truth of the new religion by its conformity with the divine element in human nature. His great original ideas are sustained by a mass of learning; they glow always with the fire of love to God and man, and are illuminated by the sometimes excessive play of a brilliant imagination. The current of ideas which Clement set in motion was too pure, too spiritual for his age; and after the time of his illustrious successor, the stream was to lose itself among the waste sands of external authority, and never to be seen again in its pristine transparency till the days of Pascal. But before thus disappearing for a time, it was, under the guidance of Origen, to flow onwards in a fuller stream and in a more steady and defined course. In his teaching, instead of an exposition broken by constant digressions, we have a chain of close and continuous argument; instead of the thousand intertwining, crossing threads of a variegated fabric, we have one clear and telling line of thought. It is only just to Clement to admit, before we part from him, that he had not the advantage of being engaged in conflict with a skilful opponent, and that he was not perpetually recalled to his subject by a keen and watchful adversary. Nor must we forget that it is more easy to perfect a method than to invent it, to draw conclusions than to lay down principles. Men grope with doubtful

steps along a dark and untried way, but a special glory ever belongs to the pioneer, and this glory, beyond question, is Clement's.

(c.) The Apologies of Origen, of Hippolytus, and of Minutius Felix briefly epitomised.

Origen accepts the great principles of the Apology of Clement; he regards them as already demonstrated, and contents himself with simply affirming them. Thus he establishes with equal clearness the essential relation between man and God, the universal operation of grace upon the race of Adam, the preparation made for the Gospel in paganism itself, and the determining power of the will in the formation of religious beliefs. In an admirable passage he says: "The Divine Word slumbers in the hearts of the unbelievers, while it is awake in the saints. It slumbers, but is not the less really present, as Jesus Christ was in the ship with His disciples, when they were tossing in terror on the stormy sea. It will awake so soon as the soul, become anxious for salvation, shall call, and then immediately there will be a great calm.* In other words, the Son of God is not a stranger to man; all of the divine that remains in our soul testifies to His presence within us; but the Word within slumbers until it is aroused by an earnest desire after salvation and by an act of the will." We shall constantly find these grand ideas at the basis of the

* "Adhuc in infidelibus dormitat sermo divinus; vigilat in sanctis. Dormitat in his qui tempestatibus fluctuant, suscitatur vero eorum vocibus qui cupiunt vigilante sponso salvari." (Origen "In Cantic.," Homily II. 9.)

demonstration which Origen gives of Christianity; they have not, in his treatment, the same freshness as in the writings of his predecessors, but he has turned them to so good account, and presented them with so much amplitude, that although he did not originate the method he employs, he deserves to be entitled the foremost of the apologists of the Alexandrine school. He shed light upon more than one obscure point, and treated in a masterly manner the relation of external and internal evidence. We shall find him always taking his stand on moral grounds in the conflict with the foes of Christianity; there he resolutely remained, and his peculiar tactics consisted in compelling his adversaries to meet him on this arena.

Restrictions of space oblige us to pass over the very full and interesting reply made by Origen to the objections urged by Celsus from the Judaistic standpoint. He would not be entangled in the network of rabbinical quibbles. "Would to God," he exclaims, "that these calumniators of the Word, who are ignorant of the most essential truths, were also ignorant of the very letter of the Scriptures, that they might not be able to render their attacks so plausible, and to shake, I say not the faith, but the little faith of feeble believers!" Origen hastens to lead his adversaries into the moral sphere, that there he may vindicate even in their view the reproach of the cross. Regarded from this standpoint, the crucifixion of Christ appears as a free sacrifice, no longer as a death of shame. If there is found some opponent of soul so base, as still to see a brand of dishonour in this voluntary offering of the infinite charity of a God, Origen appeals from such objection

not to texts of Scripture, but to the living book of the soul, to its noble instincts, to that spontaneous recognition which conscience gives to every act of self-devotion. When the spotless victim of Calvary shall be blamed by the common consent of mankind, in that same day men will cease to admire Socrates, who would drink death rather than save himself by a lie, or Leonidas marching joyfully to a certain and premature grave for the salvation of his country.*

The apologist is equally happy whether adopting the calm tone of philosophical discussion, or speaking in the more vehement accents of righteous indignation. He feels that the light which is to carry conviction to the incredulous Jew must flash fire, for till Pharisaic pride has been humbled in the dust, like Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, it will effectually bar the access to truth. Origen, therefore, rebuked the pride of Judaism in his most powerful accents. Following the example of Stephen in his address to the Sanhedrim, he connected the present unbelief of the Jews with their unbelief in the past. They are ever the same stiff-necked people, hardened in rebellion. They smile contemptuously now when we speak to them of the God who came to dwell among them; but was not this same God present in olden time in the midst of the Hebrews, when He led them, with a stretched-out arm and with many signs and wonders, out of Egypt, when He smote the waters of the Red Sea that they might pass over on dry land, when He walked with them in the cloudy pillar, and most of all when He

* "Contra Celsum," II. 17.

proclaimed His law from Sinai? and yet those who thus in a manner beheld Him with open vision, believed not in Him,* else they would not have fashioned a senseless idol at the very foot of the sacred mount. "And the race is ever the same; what signs and miracles did not God show them in the wilderness, but they continued still in unbelief. And now, neither the marvellous appearing of Christ, nor His words of authority, nor His miracles wrought before all the people, could persuade them to believe in Him.† Their present unbelief is in strict accordance with all that their own books tell of their want of faith in the past. Which miracles, think you, are the greater, those wrought in Egypt and in the desert, or those of Christ? If you give the preference to the former, must it not be easy to comprehend that the people who resisted the greater miracles should also resist the less? If you place both on the same level, is it astonishing if the same people should show themselves equally incredulous in view of the miracles, which are at the basis of both covenants? . . . . In rejecting Jesus Christ, you bear witness against yourselves that you are the worthy sons of those who in the wilderness withstood the clearest manifestations of the divine power."‡ The unbelief of the Jews is far more culpable than that of the pagans. We may not marvel, then, if their punishment has been heavier than that of the proconsul, who, at their instigation, condemned Christ. Pilate would have deserved to be torn limb from limb, like Pentheus,

* Ἠπιστήθη ὑπὸ τῶν εἰδότων. ("Contra Celsum," II. 74.) † Ibid.

‡ Μαρτυρεῖτε δὲ ὧν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἀπιστεῖτε, ὅτι υἱοί ἐστε τῶν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἀπιστησάντων ταῖς θείαις ἐπιφανείαις. (Ibid., II. 75.)

say our adversaries, if Christ had been really God. But the true Pentheus is not the Roman judge, but the nation which slew its God, and whose living members have been, as the due meed of this crime, scattered in fragments over the whole surface of the earth, thus enduring a punishment more terrible and more lasting than that which, according to the fable, was visited on the enemy of Bacchus.* The unbelief of the Jews has drawn down upon them the most fearful calamities. The time of their chastisement has not tarried, it has already come. What nation has been thus driven from its capital and from the country where it held its national worship? The cause of this unparalleled catastrophe is their crime against Christ.† But their condemnation has been the occasion of a large blessing; it has cast down the barrier between the truth and mankind, and the good news of salvation is spreading over the earth like long pent-up waters, which have at length found a free outlet.‡ It is for this purpose the whole world has been brought together under the laws of the Roman emperor, for a multiplicity of kingdoms would have hindered the diffusion of the doctrine of Christ throughout the entire universe.§

Origen, after thus verifying the obduracy of the synagogue, turns to the pagans, saying, in the noble words of St. Paul, "God hath opened to us the door of the Gentiles." In this more closely philosophical argument he uses the same kind of reasoning which had proved so victorious in the case of the Jews; but while

* Ὑπὲρ τὸν Πενθέως σπαραγμὸν διασπαρέν. ("Contra Celsum," II. 34)

† Ibid., II. 8.

‡ Συνεχρήσατο τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων πρὸς τὴν κλῆσιν τῶν ἐθνῶν. (Ibid., II. 78.)

§ Ibid., II. 30.

thus analogous in substance, we shall find it admirably adapted in form to the new adversaries he is desirous to vanquish and convince.

Origen commences by establishing the historic claims of the Old Testament in opposition to the mocking impeachments of Celsus. Then he refutes the objections which were aimed rather at the person of the Christians than at their doctrine. He shows that they are neither impertinent innovators nor rebels. He dwells upon their heroic courage under persecution. How can those men be accused of cowardice, who fear nothing but the judgment of God? It is asserted and maintained that they are the scum of the earth. Away with such delusions! These unhappy men, whom their fellows regard as the rejected of heaven, are in very truth the hidden prop of the world, which owes its preservation to their prayers; they are the ten righteous in Sodom. They are the preserving salt of the earth,* and the earth will stand only so long as this salt retains its savour. Christians are subject to persecutions only in the measure which God is pleased to permit. When He sees fit to stay the fire and sword, the disciples of Christ may go forward, safe and sound, amidst the raging malice and hatred of a world, well sustained by Him who said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." He has, in truth, overcome it, and the world has no more power than that which its victors may be pleased yet for a time to grant to it. Our confidence is in that victory.† If God sends us forth to fight the battles of the faith, we will march boldly to meet our enemies, crying, "I can do

* "Contra Celsum," VIII. 70. † Θαῤῥοῦμεν τῇ ἐκείνου νίκῃ. (Ibid.)

all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "The very hairs of our head are all numbered." Beside, affliction is in reality a blessing to the Christian; it proves his faith and ripens him for heaven. If the Church is reproached with the obscurity and low estate of most of its members, the apologist replies, with the eloquence of love, that the highest glory of the new religion is, that it has been mindful of those who had no earthly heritage. It is not that the Church rejects the wise and well-informed, and favours ignorance; on the contrary, she fully recognises that knowledge is a valuable preliminary leading on to truth,* but she seeks to diffuse her benefits equally among all the children of men. "We openly avow that we desire to instruct every human being in the knowledge of God. We desire to offer to the young woman the exhortation befitting her age and condition; we desire to teach the slave how, if he becomes free in spirit, he will be the free man of our religion. We hold ourselves debtors to the learned and to the unlearned. We thus act that we may bring healing to every soul endowed with reason, and restore it to the fellowship of God.† We refuse no one, not the most untutored man, or vile slave, or ignorant woman or child; we accept all that we may better all.‡ The brigand is not shut out; if we bid him to our company it is not as robbers welcoming another to their band, it is that we may bind up the wounds of his spirit with the truth, and pour into them the healing balm of the Word, which is more effectual than wine

* Τὸ φρόνιμον εἶναι καλόν ἐστιν. ("Contra Celsum," III. 50.)
† Ibid., III. 54.
‡ Τούτους καλεῖ ὁ λόγος, ἵνα αὐτοὺς βελτιώσῃ. (Ibid., III. 49.)

and oil."* After all, the end of all proselytism worthy of the name is to impart true knowledge to the ignorant; this has been ever the vocation of philosophy. What occasion, then, is there to blame the Christian, who, like a good physician, seeks out the sick that he may heal them, and the weak and weary that he may renew their strength?† Further, though it is true that great sinners are not excluded from the Church, but on the contrary are bidden to come in, they are yet in the minority, for the new religion gathers its most numerous adherents among men of noble hearts, who love goodness and truth.‡ Nevertheless, it turns with tender compassion towards all who need its help, be they who they may. "I admit, then, that I seek out even the lowest of mankind to render them as much better as I can; but it is false that these outcasts alone constitute the Christian Church. My preference is naturally for those quick and intelligent spirits which can grasp the hidden meaning of the law, the prophets, and the Gospels."§ In other words, Christianity carries light to every grade of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest.

Pagan philosophy, after vituperating against the proselytism of the Church, directed its attacks against the first missionaries of the new religion. These it compared to designing persons of a low class, luring away young people from the instruction of a venerable father and of illustrious masters, to use them for their own purposes. "These designing persons," Origen

* "Contra Celsum," III. 61.

† Ὡς φιλάνθρωπος ἰατρός. (Ibid., III. 74.)

‡ Ibid., III. 65.

§ Ibid., III. 56.

replies, "are men who seek by every means to raise our souls towards the Author of all things, who teach us to tread under foot all that is visible and transitory, and to enter into fellowship with God. That which we teach these young people, whom we are charged with leading astray, is at least as valuable as anything they could have learned from those venerable fathers and illustrious masters, of whom so loud a boast is made. We snatch young girls from a life of immodesty, from the obscene dances in the theatres, from debasing superstition; we give the young man that which will act as a check upon youthful lusts, revealing to him not only the infamy of such pleasures, but also the perils to which they expose him, and the chastisements they will bring down upon his head." What were those beautiful and noble lessons which youth had learned from the masters, the loss of whose teaching is so much lamented? The young people had learned to frequent theatres and haunts of vice. They were hardened in all wickedness. Such teaching was surely not a treasure to be so sedulously guarded. Truly philosophical teaching, Christians are the last to repudiate: on the contrary, they call it to their aid. "We do not turn away the young from the study of philosophy;* rather, when we find their minds exercised by the pursuit of the preparatory sciences, we endeavour to raise them to the sublime heights of the Gospel, which are to the many inaccessible. We invite them to receive from Christians the philosophy taught by Christ, His prophets and apostles." Let men beware of magnifying the greatness of the masters who preceded the Divine

* Οὐκ ἀποτρέψω ἀπὸ τούτων τοὺς νέους. ("Contra Celsum," III. 58.)

Teacher, and of representing them to us as skilful physicians followed by an ignorant empiric. In fact, if we no longer contemplate philosophy in a general manner, as a science which imparts positive knowledge and exercises the mind advantageously in habits of meditation; if we take it now as embodied in its principal systems, we must acknowledge that it has furnished mankind with but poor physicians, and that there is pressing need to remove from their treatment the sick, who are nothing bettered, but rather grow worse. Is it not a service rendered to a man, to alienate him from the philosophy of Epicurus, which denies the gods, or from the Peripatetic philosophy, which breaks every link between the creature and the Creator, and brands faith in Providence as arrant superstition? Is it not a true service, to lead him to withdraw his adherence from that proud Stoicism, which has failed to invent anything better than a material God, and from the idle dreams of metempsychosis, taught by the disciples of Pythagoras? In acting thus, we do not remove the sick man from his true physicians; on the contrary, we heal him of the wounds which a false philosophy has inflicted on his spirit.* Silence, then, to all the slanders brought against the defenders of Christianity! It is idle to compare Christians to drunken men who would entice others into their own sin, or to blind men who would have all others as blind as themselves. The intoxicated man is not the Christian, but the worshipper of matter, drunk with lust in the temples of his gods; the blind man is he who, in presence of the great and

* Μεγάλων τραυμάτων, τῶν ἀπὸ λόγων νομιζομένων φιλοσόφων ἀπαλλάσσομεν τοὺς πειθομένους ἡμῖν. ("Contra Celsum," III. 75.)

beautiful works of creation, fails to recognise, to admire and adore their Author.* The fatal weakness of the philosophers consists in this—that they set themselves forth as the objects of faith; they are feeble and ignorant as we, and yet each of them ventures to say: Believe in me.† For ourselves, we say: Believe in the supreme God, the perfect master revealed in Jesus Christ. None of us is so mad as to say to those whom we teach: I myself will save you. Thus, between Christianity and the wisdom of the ancients, there is all the difference between a philosophy and a religion.

After these general reflections, Origen enters on the positive apology. As far as regards the method of Christian teaching, he only reproduces the noble argument of Clement in an enriched and perfected form. The point to be established is, that Christianity, in claiming of us faith, does no violence to the laws of rational certainty, as it is accused of doing; and that from the standpoint of true reason, its so-called folly is more reasonable than the wisdom of the world. Origen points out first of all, that a certain act of faith and trust precedes necessarily every great human enterprise of whatever nature. Without such an act of faith, no man would start on a voyage, or enter into marriage, or bring up children, or entrust the seed-corn to the earth, for the result of the undertaking must be in all cases doubtful. "If hope and faith in the future are the necessary conditions of the continuance of human life, especially where some uncertainty

* "Contra Celsum," V. 77.

† *Οὐδὲ τὸ ἐμοὶ προσεχετε, κἂν διδάσκωμεν, φαμέν.* (Ibid., V. 76.)

remains as to the results of our activity,* shall not faith appear yet more necessary when we are contemplating a venture far more momentous than navigation, marriage, or seed-sowing? He in whom we have to place our faith is the God who has made all things, and who, in the accomplishment of His great designs, has Himself submitted to suffering and a shameful death, that the truth might have free course among men." Again: no one enters a school of philosophy, and devotes himself to its high studies, unless he previously has confidence in the master he has chosen. Thus this very faith with which we are upbraided, is the door to the very philosophy which is placed in opposition to us. Can it, indeed, be a reasonable thing to place confidence in one of the heads of the innumerable schools which have been established in Greece, and in the midst of the barbarous world, and yet not reasonable to believe in the Supreme Master, who has proved that He alone merits our adoration?† Christianity, then, when it requires faith from its adherents, does not in any way take a strange and exceptional position; it follows the common rule laid down by reason itself.

This faith also, as we have seen, rests upon a good foundation. The Christian has placed his trust in One who is supremely worthy of it. So far from interdicting inquiry, faith courts it: everything in Christianity encourages and quickens thought. The most learned philosophy does not so stimulate the spirit of inquiry

* Συνέχει τὸν βίον ἐν πάσῃ πράξει ἀδήλῳ, οπως ἐκβήσεται, ἡ ἐλπὶς καὶ ἡ πίστις. ("Contra Celsum," I. 11.)

† Πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον τῷ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεῷ πιστεύειν. (Ibid.)

as does revelation, by the oracles of its prophets, by its symbols and parables.* Christianity fully recognises the superiority of a solidly-established conviction.† While the humble Christian, who is not equal to any sustained train of logical thought, finds all the argument he requires in the Master's word, the Christian of larger mental power is bound to seek aids to faith, whether in the interpretation of Holy Scripture, or in philosophical reasoning. The sacred writings themselves enjoin the use of the rational faculties in religion.‡ When the Apostle Paul calls wisdom folly, he is speaking of the wisdom of the world. That wisdom is folly because it deals solely with that which is sensible; it believes in matter only, and recognises nothing beyond the visible. We have reason then to call it folly in spite of its specious arguments.§ "On the other hand, we call that the wisdom of God, which draws our soul away from lower things to set it upon the high and blessed God, which teaches us to lightly esteem all that is bounded by time and space, and to rise to the contemplation of the invisible, of those things which eye hath not seen."‖ Christianity presents itself to us as the highest philosophy. If some of its adherents speak otherwise, and boast of their ignorance, it is unjust to impute to the Gospel that for which

* *Εὑρεθήσεται καὶ ἐν τῷ χριστιανισμῷ οὐκ ἐλάττων, ἐξέτασις τῶν πεπιστευμένων.* ("Contra Celsum," I. 9; comp. III. 45–74.)

† *Πολλῷ διαφέρει μετὰ λόγου καὶ σοφίας συγκατατίθεσθαι τοῖς δόγμασιν, ἢπερ μετὰ ψιλῆς πίστεως.* (Ibid., I. 13.)

‡ Ibid., IV. 9, VI. 11; comp. VI. 7.

§ Ibid., III. 47–73.

‖ *Σπεύδειν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀόρατα καὶ σκοπεῖν τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα, ταῦτά φησι σοφίαν εἶναι θεοῦ.* (Ibid., III. 47; comp. III. 72.)

these persons alone are answerable. The Christian faith is in very truth founded on reason.* Faith is in harmony with the universal consciousness of man.† The soul, endowed with reason, has but to consult its own nature, and it will reject the gods it has falsely worshipped, and find the native element of its spiritual life in its Creator."‡ Thus even in the folly of the cross is maintained that great moral law, that all certainty in religious matters must be based on the inherent relation between the soul and the truth. Origen is ever mindful that religious truth belongs essentially to the realm of morals. He asks how that truth can by possibility clash with the nature of man, in which God has from the beginning engraven His law—a law of holiness, which abides for ever as the charter of the universal kingdom and of the spiritual community, a law which no written legislation can ever nullify or abrogate.§ Before the prophets and the Saviour taught divine lessons to man, God had already written those lessons on the fleshy tables of the human heart.‖ Origen thus denies as positively as Clement, the existence of any contradiction between faith and knowledge. The one leads to the other; for in this higher region of knowledge, science must necessarily be founded upon faith. Let philosophy cease then to speak contemptuously of

* "Contra Celsum," III. 44.

† *Τὰ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν ταῖς κοιναῖς ἐννοίαις ἀρχῆθεν συναγορεύοντα.* (Ibid., III. 40.)

‡ *Φίλτρον ἀναλαμβάνει φυσικὸν τὸ πρὸς τὸν κτίσαντα.* (Ibid.)

§ Ibid., V. 37.

‖ *Διόπερ οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν, τὸν αὐτὸν θεὸν ἅπερ ἐδίδαξε διὰ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἐγκατεσσαρκέναι ταῖς ἁπάντων ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς.* (Ibid., I. 3 ; comp. VIII. 72.)

Christian faith, which, so far from stultifying thought, lends it wings to rise into the sphere of the divine.

From the question of the method of Christian teaching, Origen passes to the treatment of its substance. It is not enough to have established that faith rests upon examination; it is needful further to show the result of that examination, and to demonstrate that the Christian doctrine does actually meet the true needs of the soul, and has valid claims on our confidence.

One of the objections made to the exclusive demands of Christianity, was founded on the points of resemblance it presented with the philosophies and religions of antiquity. Origen first reduces these analogies to their exact value, and then makes use of them as a fresh argument in support of the faith. Those who controverted the originality of Christianity made it their grand endeavour to confound it with Platonism. From their representations it would seem that the Gospel was but Platonism wrongly construed; and they found more than one specious argument to adduce in support of their thesis. The philosophy of Plato was, as we have seen, the loftiest flight of ancient thought towards the ideal; in spite of all its errors, it gave expression to the sacred aspirations of conscience in sublime language, and while it was still fatally weighted with the invincible dualism under which paganism had succumbed, it at least caught a glimpse of truths which it failed either to consecrate into a religion, or to disengage from flagrant contradictions. It was natural that there should be a remarkable correspondence between the religion which brought these great truths into full and clear light, and the

philosophy which had helped to prepare the way for them. Again: Christianity, taking form in the Greek world, could not but use the language of Greece; and that language, in all the expressions of higher thought, was deeply imbued with the spirit of Plato. Hence arose numerous analogies of expression, which it was easy to misconstrue. It was, therefore, of extreme importance to vindicate the originality of the Gospel in distinction from Platonism. Origen has devoted to this important discussion, the greater part of the sixth book of his treatise against Celsus. He commences by showing that if on some points the Christians coincide with the Platonists; if they sanction the purer notions of the divinity diffused by the Academy; if they also repudiate the gross polytheism of the many; if they approvingly endorse the noble words of Plato on the Supreme Good—the spark of which is kindled spontaneously in the human soul;—they have at least this advantage, that they act conformably with these high beliefs, while the philosophers, after all their eloquent dissertations on the Supreme Good, "go down to the Piræus to worship at the shrine of Diana, to offer prayer to her, and to take part in the feast celebrated in her honour by an ignorant multitude." After discoursing on the soul, and on the blessed reward of virtue, they lose sight of these grand truths revealed to them by God, debase themselves by beggarly superstitions, and sacrifice a cock to Esculapius.* It is a false assertion that ancient philosophy scorned to seek support in prodigies, and placed all its reliance in the

* Ἀλλ' οἱ τοιαῦτα περὶ τοῦ πρώτου ἀγαθοῦ γράψαντες καταβαίνουσιν εἰς Πειραιέα, προσευξόμενοι ὡς θεῷ τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι. ("Contra Celsum," VI. 4.)

inherent power of truth. While the miracles of the Gospel are simple and sublime, the marvels of pagan philosophy are a tissue of idle legends. Who cannot call to mind the fables current about the birth of Plato and the adventures of Pythagoras? * If a closer scrutiny be made of the thoughts which are common to Platonism and to the sacred books of the Christians, it will be seen that these truths had been uttered by the prophets, ages before the time of the philosopher of the Academy, while it is not possible to charge the prophets and apostles with having sought and found these precious pearls in Greece.† Lamentable errors also are found associated with these sublime ideas, even in the writings of the divine Plato; ‡ and, in any case, the grand truths are conveyed in an incomplete and obscure form, which mars and veils their true beauty. Plato has nobly said "that no poet has ever yet sung, nor ever will sing worthily, of the good which is higher than the heavens."

Origen claims our very highest admiration for a moderation of thought which always prevents him from going to extremes, and for the just measure which he retains in all his arguments. Thus he does not allow himself to be led into pronouncing a sweeping anathema upon the whole culture of the ancients. Satisfied with having established the originality and novelty of the religion of Christ, he gladly points out the stepping-stones towards it in the ancient world, and these stepping-stones he discovers not only in the schools of the philosophers, but even in the polluted temples of

* "Contra Celsum," VI. 8.

† Ibid., VI. 7, 9, 10.

‡ Ibid., VI. 17.

paganism. There was nothing to be added to that which Clement had so well said upon the high mission of Greek philosophy. Origen explicitly acknowledges that all the elements of truth contained in it, have a divine source.* But he goes further: the most absurd myths are, in his view, the confused and disordered expression of the aspirations of the human conscience. In all the countless legends which relate to the miraculous birth of heroes or eminent sages, he sees a vague presentiment of the incarnation.

Celsus, as we have seen, in his pantheistic materialism, delighted to degrade man to the level of the brute. Origen, after vindicating the principles of theism, uses his lofty eloquence to exalt the dignity of human nature. He says: "A being endowed with reason and capable of good, cannot be likened to a worm of the earth. The idea of good, of which he is capable, and the indestructible germs of virtue within him, forbid such a comparison. Reason, which proceeds from the Divine Word, maintains an enduring relation between the rational creature and God."† Let it not be said that man is lower than the brutes, because his natural wants are less easily supplied. This inferiority is in reality an advantage, for it stimulates his activity, and God designed thus to call into exercise all his powers and capabilities, and to lead him on to the practice of all the arts and sciences of civilisation. He is invested with a true kingship over the inferior creatures.‡

* Ὁ θεός γὰρ αὐτοῖς ταῦτα καὶ ὅσα καλῶς λέλεκται ἐφανέρωσε. ("Contra Celsum," VI. 3.)

† Οὐκ ἐᾷ τὸ λογικὸν ζῶον πάντῃ ἀλλότριον νομισθῆναι θεοῦ. (Ibid., IV. 25.)

‡ Ibid., V. 78.

Man must, after all, be always separated from the brute by the whole distance which divides instinct from reason —the image of God in us.* The world, therefore, was made, not for creatures endowed simply with instinct, but for those who have the gift of reason. While God is not angry with monkeys or flies, He chastises men who break His law.† This chastisement is a mark of His love and respect for the human creature, and enables us to believe that He may move heaven and earth for man's salvation. From this point of view, the incarnation and humiliation of the Son of God for human redemption can be conceived. It was not to augment His own glory that the Word came down to earth; it was that by shedding abroad His light in our hearts, and drawing us by intimate association to Himself, He might bring us back to God.‡ Was not that very humiliation itself the sacrifice of redeeming love?

While recognising the necessity of miracles, Origen does not make these the grand support of his apology, which rests entirely on moral grounds. He brings out in an admirable manner the difference between Christian miracles and magic. "Show me the magician who calls upon the spectators of his prodigies to reform their life, or who teaches his admirers the fear of God, and seeks to persuade them to act as those who must appear before Him as their judge? The magicians do nothing of the sort, either because they are incapable of it or because they have no such desire. Themselves charged with crimes the most shameful and infamous, how should they attempt the reformation of the morals

* Εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ λόγος. ("Contra Celsum," IV. 85.)
† Ibid., IV. 98. ‡ Ibid., IV. 6.

of others? The miracles of Christ, on the contrary, all bear the impress of His own holiness, and He ever uses them as the means of winning to the cause of goodness and truth those who witnessed them. Thus He presented His own life as the perfect model, not only to His immediate disciples but to all men. He taught His disciples to make known to those that heard them, the perfect will of God; and He revealed to mankind, *far more by His life and words than by His miracles*,* the secret of that holiness by which it is possible in all things to please God. If such was the life of Jesus, how can He be compared to mere charlatans, and why may we not believe that He was indeed God manifested in the flesh, for the salvation of our race?" Origen brings his moral demonstration to a climax by appealing to the life of the Christians, to their glorious triumphs over sin and persecution.

We have thus briefly sketched this great apology, placing it before us in more regular order than we find it in his book, but retaining all its characteristic features. He replied to the principal objections of his adversaries, not only by refuting them on their own ground, but also by meeting them with views broader, truer, higher than any they had advanced. He followed the Jew on to the arena of rabbinical exegesis; he confounded him from the very text of Scripture, proving that he was unfaithful to his own revelation, and that if he had listened to Moses and the prophets, they would have led him to the foot of the cross. His vigorous reasoning broke the dialectic network in which pagan philosophy sought to

* Πλέον διδαχθέντες ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἤθους ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν παραδόξων ὡς χρὴ βιοῦν. ("Contra Celsum," I. 68.)

ensnare him; he nobly vindicated the Christians from all the base calumnies current in the muddy stream of popular superstition. The apologist showed that this herd of obscure individuals, among whom the slave and the brigand found a ready place, was in truth the Church of the living God, the hidden prop of the world, which is upheld and continued only for its sake; he marked in these proscribed men the dignity of conscience, daring to rebel against human precepts in obedience to a higher law, and he pointed to the novel claim of moral freedom, about to assert itself in victorious opposition to ancient despotism. To the injurious accusations laid against Christianity, Origen replied by describing its peaceable triumphs in the midst of an opposing world, and observed that its progress might be tracked by bleeding footprints, and by benefits conferred. A new society, the school of all virtues, purifying all who entered it, had arisen in the midst of the darkness of universal corruption, and heroic sufferings had sealed, first, the testimony of its early apostles, and then that of innumerable missionaries. From the defence of the Christians themselves, Origen proceeds to that of the religion they honour. He proves its superiority in the matter of form, its transparent simplicity making the truth accessible to the unlearned man, to the child, the woman, and the slave, and he repeats the beautiful and touching invitation of Christ: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." This pure and limpid stream of living water was surely better than that intoxicating cup of man's admixture, which was offered only to a few of the initiated—the worshippers of artistic beauty. In that doctrine which

men called foolishness, because it could not be arrived at by a process of pure and unaided reasoning,—since it was as much beyond the grasp of man as the finite is beyond the infinite,—the apologist discerns all the treasures of wisdom and of truth, and he shows that faith is a legitimate mode of attaining certainty, and one in conformity with the laws of knowledge. Having established by an erudite discussion the originality of the new religion, showing that it is not a heterogeneous compound of the religious and philosophical ideas of the ancients, he presents it as the central point in the history of mankind, the goal of all its aspirations. This train of thought leads him to exalt the dignity of man in the name of a true theism, as opposed to pantheistic fatalism. The proud philosophers of pantheism, trampling man's moral nature in the dust, preferred to place him lower than the brutes rather than bow before the Crucified One, and receive salvation as a glorious gift from a free and personal God. A true and deep respect for the soul, created in the image of God, but fallen from its high estate, is the best explanation of the great mystery of godliness—the humiliation and incarnation of the God-Man. The resurrection of Christ is established by a full and learned process of argument, because it is of far more significance than a simple miracle; it is Christianity itself. We have observed that Origen does not make miracle or prophecy the main-stay of the Gospel; in and beyond both he seeks the sacred sign of the ultimate religion for mankind—that impress of moral perfection which witnesses to the Son of God. The person of the Good Shepherd of the sheep, who lays down His life for

them, and with yearning compassion goes after that which is lost, until He find it, shines forth with pure and heavenly lustre throughout the work of Origen. He is perpetually set forth as the Desire of all nations, the true desire of the heart of every man. But in order to discern His beauty and His divinity beneath the veil of His humiliation, the new eye is needed, the eye of the pure in heart. Sin must be cast away; the soul must rise out of the dust of this lower world, to those clear heights which the mists of earth cannot reach. Those alone will see and believe, who desire to hear and see. Origen insists, with holy importunity, whether he is addressing himself to Jew or Greek, on the necessity of this determination of the will. Every question, whether of greater or less importance, leads him to urge this act of moral volition, on which faith, with all its divine evidences, will follow. His whole apology might be summed up in this saying of Christ: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Thus he harmonises respect for human nature with hatred of the sin which has defiled it; largeness of thought with strictness of conscience. Profiting by the labours of those who had gone before him, Origen gave to Christian antiquity its most complete apology—that which is most in conformity with the spirit of the Gospel, and was best adapted to bring men's thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ, in the age of universal agitation in which he lived. Many centuries were yet to elapse before the Church could present to the world any other defence of her faith comparable to this noble book written by one under the ban of excommunication.

The West gives us but two apologists belonging to this noble school. The first is St. Hippolytus, bishop of the port of Rome. We find these significant words in his treatise against the Jews:* "The eye of reason is the Spirit; † by it we discern spiritual things. If you have the Spirit, you will comprehend heavenly things, for like comprehends like." We might almost imagine these were the words of Clement of Alexandria. Hippolytus admits that the ancient world was not wholly destitute of truth; he cites with eulogy some of the noble thoughts of Plato.‡ He does not hesitate to take up, in his book on the Universe, the myth of Timæus, in reference to the future life. The famous motto of Socrates, "Know thyself," is, he says, confirmed by the Gospel, which has revealed to us that the true destiny of man is to be completely united to God.§ From the great pile of pagan error and superstition, as from a vast heap of smouldering ruins, rises a flame, an aspiration, a desire, which will point true hearts to Christ. "The Word," he says, "will help those who are eager to know the truth, not only to escape the seductive snares of heresy, because its principles will be known, but also not to be troubled in mind by the opinions of the philosophers, because a true vision will pierce through their dark sayings." ‖

* A fragment of the "Discourse to the Jews" is found in Appendix III. of the anonymous "Acta Martyrum," p. 449–488. The unknown compiler ascribed it to Cyprian; but the clear analogy of the passage with the fragment we find in Fabricius points conclusively to Hippolytus as the author.

† Τὸ πνεῦμα. ‡ "Philosoph.," I. 19.

§ Ibid., I. 18, compared with Ibid., X. 34.

‖ Ἔτι δὲ καὶ τοὺς τῇ ἀληθείᾳ προσέχοντας φιλομαθεῖς προβιβάσει ὁ λόγος. (Ibid., IV. 45.)

The following fragment from the writings of Minutius Felix, shows that he belonged to the same school of apologists: "Have we not on this matter the universal consent of mankind? When the unlettered man raises his hands to heaven, he utters no name but the name of God. 'God is great; God is true; if it pleases God;' such is the voice of Nature, and would not this also be the prayer of the Christian? Those who make Jupiter the sovereign deity, err only in name; they are one with us as to the unity of the power."

These closing words show that Minutius Felix discerned, even in the gross darkness of popular paganism, a ray of religious truth, the smoking flax of the prophet; and this vision of the divine he saw shining forth far more clearly in the higher culture of antiquity. Minutius takes pleasure in gathering up the witness of poets and philosophers to the unity and majesty of God; he is, indeed, perhaps open to the charge of giving too favourable an interpretation to indefinite expressions which, in their natural sense, belonged rather to a vague pantheism, than to a genuine and sound monotheism. He goes further than the boldest of the school of Alexandrine catechists, in his estimate of the results of the ancient philosophy. "I have given," he says, "the opinions of all the most illustrious philosophers. All have taught the one God under various names, so that it might be inferred either that Christians are the philosophers of our day, or that the philosophers were Christians by anticipation."* Elsewhere Octavius appeals to the testimony of the philosophers, in support

* "Ut quivis arbitretur, aut nunc Christianos philosophos esse, aut philosophos fuisse jam Christianos." ("Octav.," xx.)

of the dogma of the final judgment and of the resurrection, but in this respect he exaggerates the influence of Hebrew prophecy over the schools of Greece.*

§ III. *The Second School of Apologists of Primitive Christianity.*

In addition to the great school of apologists who recognise a work of preparation for Christianity in the ancient world, and especially in the higher developments of Greek philosophy, we find another school of narrower views, which, while admitting like the former an essential relation between the new religion and the human soul, condemns *in toto*, and often with much bitterness, everything born of paganism, whether the philosophical systems of the schools, or the mysterious fables of the sanctuaries. This school of apologists, though inferior in mental power to that which flourished at Alexandria, pleaded the cause of Christianity with greater, because more passionate eloquence, while no considerations availed to temper or check the virulence of its invectives. We shall pass rapidly over the inferior works belonging to this school, that we may form our estimate of it, more particularly from its most distinguished writings.

The line of demarcation between the more timid apologists of the broad school, and the more moderate of the school we are now considering, is somewhat difficult to trace. Both admit that the Greek philosophers were acquainted with the sacred books of the Jews, but they differ in this, that while Justin and

* "Quod illi de divinis prædicationibus prophetarum umbram interpolatæ veritatis imitati sunt." ("Octav.," xxxiv.)

Athenagoras suppose a direct operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul of the illustrious representatives of paganism, the apologists of the second school refer the scattered elements of truth found in the midst of pagan error, exclusively to the writings of Moses and the prophets. They also appeal to the oracles of the Sibyl, which they regard as a true prophecy given to Greece.

(a.) Tertullian.

The two "Discourses to the Greeks," falsely attributed to Justin, are distinguished by the bitterness of their sarcasms against the whole ancient pagan world. Tatian, who subsequently became a heretic, is even more violent and implacable in his hostility to all the higher culture of the ancients. The "Letter to Diognetes," though more moderate in form, is no less severe upon the religion and philosophy of Greece.*

* The "Letter to Diognetes" was, as is well-known, long attributed to Justin. This theory has been taken up with a great show of demonstration by Otto ("In Opera Justin," 1849, Vol. II. p. 156); but it will not bear close examination. 1st. The difference between the unknown author and Justin Martyr is very marked. This is at once palpable, if a page of the two Apologies and a page of the "Dialogue with Trypho" be collated. 2nd. The difference of thought on very important points is no less distinct. The doctrine of the *spermatic* Word is entirely absent from the "Epistle to Diognetes." Paganism is there represented as absolute error, and no exception is made in favour of the philosophers. The Mosaic institutions are condemned with equal severity, while in the "Dialogue with Trypho," their divine origin is clearly acknowledged. 3rd The author of the "Letter to Diognetes" regards the false gods as merely idols of wood and stone; Justin treats them as demoniacal powers. It is, therefore, impossible to consider him the author of a writing which is directly contradictory of his most characteristic views. (See the working out of this thesis in Semisch, "Justin der Martyrer,"

Tertullian was the most illustrious representative of the second school of apologists; he expounded its principles with all his incomparable power of style. No one has vindicated more forcibly than he, the relationship of the human soul to God, and no one has pronounced a sterner or more sweeping anathema on all the past of paganism. We shall not here revert to that part of his Apology which may be regarded as a forensic plea; of this we have already given a full analysis. We have listened to his eloquent and solemn protest against the injustice of the course pursued towards the Christians, and to his juridical demonstration, that their condemnation by the tribunals of the empire was illegal. This part of his treatise is entirely distinct from the theoretic discussion of the Christian religion. In order to place beyond a doubt the iniquity of the Roman judges, it sufficed to denounce their practices, and to refute the calumnies popularly circulated against the Christians. It was of great importance to disprove the dangerous charge of rebellion against the emperor; and lastly, it was need-

Breslau, 1840, Vol. I. p. 172; and in his article in Herzog's "Encyclopædia" on the "Letter to Diognetes." See also the "Prolegoumena" of Hefele's edition of the "Apostolic Fathers," 1849.) Dorner, not without hesitation, ascribes the anonymous letters to Quadratus. ("Die Person Christi," Vol. I. p. 198.) Bunsen, without sufficient reason, ascribes it to Marcion. ("Hippolytus," Vol. I. p. 130.) The genuineness of the last two chapters is strongly disputed for three reasons:—1. The oldest MS. of the letter bears evident traces of the doubt which hung over this fragment of Christian antiquity. 2. The Epistle suddenly changes tone; it drops the form of a letter, and takes the turn of a general allocution. 3. The author speaks of the Law and the Prophets in a manner which contradicts the former part of the "Letter to Diognetes."

ful to set the impunity allowed to the crimes of the pagans in contrast with the implacable severity, with which the most innocent and law-abiding citizens were treated. This argument, of which we have shown the close continuity and impassioned process, is conclusive as a defensive plea for the Christians; but the apology, properly so called, required a more vigorous effort of thought. The forensic question, which is always more or less external, must give place to the religious and philosophical question; the great cause now to be pleaded is the subject-matter itself of the religion of Christ. Is that religion indeed the sole true and divine religion? This is the capital point to be established. Tertullian has not evaded this difficult task; the concluding chapters of his Apology, and his treatise on the "Testimony of the Soul," are devoted to this line of demonstration. He has carried into it the asperity of a narrow and often violent spirit, but he has also displayed the highest qualities of his genius. He has left an ineffaceable track in the domain of the higher apology. On this subject he has written some of those immortal pages, which are an enduring treasure to mankind, and to which every generation of Christians recurs as to a text of inexhaustible fulness. To exalt human nature in itself, but at the same time to pour scorn on all that goes beyond its most simple and natural manifestation, all, namely, that belongs to the more or less refined culture of the intellect,—such is the twofold purpose of Tertullian's writing. It appears in all his books, and is most fully manifested in his apology for Christianity. He dwells, therefore, with much insistance upon the aspirations of the human heart; he is

not afraid to seek in fallen man a pillar or stepping-stone for the work of salvation, but at the same time, by a strange contradiction, he refuses to see anything but unmixed error in the higher developments of humanity prior to Christianity. The divine element, he holds, is lost as thought becomes refined and cultivated; philosophy is, in his eyes, plagiarism or a lie. The exaltation of simple human nature, the utter depreciation of all mental culture, is the substance of Tertullian's apology. Herein lies its greatness and its weakness, its glory and its inconsistency. He is bold and profound, when he points out the germ of the Word existing still in fallen man; he is unjust when he charges philosophy with necessarily stifling that germ.

If there is one question upon which, in all ages, apologists have been divided, it is the question of the place that should be assigned to the authority of Scripture in the demonstration of the truth of Christianity. One large school has maintained, and still maintains, that we must turn from the Scriptures to Christ, and not from Christ to the Scriptures. It affirms that the sole task of the defender of Christianity, is to establish the claims of the sacred book on the ground of miracle and prophecy; this task once accomplished, there is nothing more to be done than to open the Bible; its texts have henceforward the force of law; all the mysteries of revelation are to be received unreservedly; he who has declared his faith in the container, must needs believe implicitly in that which it contains. Another school objects, with reason, that such a method secures only a purely intellectual assent; that it does

not carry conviction to the centre of the moral life, to the heart and conscience; and that it demands from the unbeliever more than he can really give, for the authority of the letter must be null with him, till he shall have been reached and subdued by the influence of the Divine Spirit, which is the life of the letter, and which can only be grasped by the moral faculties. This second school holds, therefore, that an appeal made to the conscience must be the first thing, and that the soul must be brought into the presence of Christ, as He is represented to us in the Scripture, as into the presence of the ideal towards which its own aspirations reach, and that thus alone can the divine witness be felt and perceived in the holy book, which is filled by the presence of the God-Man.

Tertullian, the ardent advocate of ecclesiastical authority in the early period of his religious life, and the author of the treatise on the "Prescriptions," openly avowed these often-decried principles, which are supposed in our day to be new because they have been so long forgotten. His treatise on the "Testimony of the Soul" opens with these words: "Long researches and a strong memory are required in order to discover by study the evidences in support of Christian truth, scattered through the authentic writings of the poets and philosophers, or in those of any masters of the philosophy and wisdom of this age, so as to carry conviction to our enemies and persecutors from their own literature. Some Christians, who have continued to cultivate letters, and have retained in a faithful memory their former literary knowledge, have composed, with a view to convincing the pagans,

treatises in which they have sought out the reason, the origin, and connection of every Christian thought, and they have thus proved that our religion has in it nothing so strange; that, on the contrary, it has on its side the universal consent of mankind contained in these books, and that it has confined itself to suppressing errors and adding truths to this common stock. But obdurate humanity has not been willing to believe its own masters, even the most illustrious and those of highest authority, when they have been thus made to furnish a justification of Christianity; and yet it was these very same poets who ascribed to the gods the passions and vanities of men, and these very same proud philosophers who would carry the gates of truth by storm. Let us, then, leave on one side the literary or philosophical works, which minister only a delusive delight, and of which the errors are better accredited than the truths. Still, further, let us not call to our aid even the testimonies which the Christian recognises as true, if we would be free from all reproach. Our sacred books are, in fact, ignored by our adversaries; or if they are known to them, they inspire no confidence. So far are men from coming to our sacred books as to an ultimate authority, that in order so to come they must be already Christians." *

Tertullian seeks to find a principle, accepted alike by his adversaries and by himself, in the discussion upon which he is entering. He rightly recognises that

* "Imo nihil, omnino relatum sit, quod agnoscat Christianus, ne exprobrare possit. Nam et quod relatum est, neque omnes sciunt, neque qui sciunt constare confidunt. Tanto abest, ut nostris litteris annuant homines, *ad quas nemo venit, nisi jam Christianus.*' (Tertullian, "De Testim. Animæ," i.)

this common basis is not to be sought in erudition, for a considerable time would be necessary to free universal truths from all foreign matters mixed up with them in the literature of the various nations. He also admits that he cannot seek this common basis in Scripture, the authority of which is recognised only by Christians; where, then, is it to be sought, except in the conscience? According to him, the spontaneous witness of the human soul is in favour of Christ. To this, then, he appeals, as to a tribunal, the competence of which is admitted by his opponents as fully as by himself. Already, in his Apology, he had given expression to the same thought. "Will you listen," he says, "to the witness of your own soul? Fettered as it is by the bonds of the body, encompassed as it is with evil, enervated by passion and lust, and enslaved by a false worship; if it is once aroused from its deep sleep of intoxication, if in the midst of its sickness it cries aloud for health, it at once utters the name of God, the one inevitable name: 'Great God! Good God! If it please God!' Such is the language of universal man. God is invoked as Judge. 'God knows,' men say; 'I appeal to God. God shall avenge me.' O spontaneous testimony of the naturally Christian soul!"* Tertullian thus emphatically affirms that conscience leads to the Gospel revelation, or rather that between the one and the other is found the agreement, which ought to exist between two revelations of the same God. His treatise on the "Testimony of the Soul" is the working out of this

* "O testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ!" ("Apologia," xvii.)

great idea. Let us listen to his own words. "I call," he says, "on a new witness, one better known than any literature, more widely diffused than any science, more popular than any book, greater than all else in man; I call on that which constitutes the unity of human nature.* Come, then, O soul, whether with many philosophers, we acknowledge thee as divine and eternal, and therefore incapable of falsehood; or whether, according to the idea of Epicurus alone, thou hast not even received immortality from Deity, and in that case dost therefore deem thyself the more bound to frankness; whether thou hast come down from heaven, or risen out of the earth, whether numbers or atoms compose thy being, whether thy formation coincides with that of the body or follows it; whatever be the elements of thy nature, thou art equally the seat of reason, of intelligence, of feeling. I summon thee, not as thou art, when fashioned by the schools, polished in libraries, and breathing out the wisdom acquired in the academies and porticoes of Athens; I want thee in thy simple, rude, uncultured, ignorant state, as thou art in those who have added nothing to nature.† I go to seek thee on the public highway, or in the workshop; I want thine inexperience, because no one has any longer confidence in thine experience, so sorry is it. I ask of thee only that which thou dost originally bring to man, only that which thou hast learnt from

* "Novum testimonium advoco, imo omni litteratura notius omni doctrina agitatius, omni editione vulgatius, toto homini majus, id est totum quod est hominis." ("De Testim. Animæ," i.)

† "Te simplicem et rudem et impolitam et idioticam compello, qualem habent qui te solam habent." (Ibid.)

thyself, or from thine author, be he who he may.* Thou art not to my knowledge, Christian, for no one is born a Christian, but must become one. The Christians, however, appeal to thy testimony, although thou art not of their sect; thou shalt speak for us against thine own defenders,† so that they may be ashamed to hate and ridicule in us, a doctrine to which thou hast made them accessory."

Tertullian establishes, by a noble train of argument, the authority of the Scriptures, but his main point is to prove the divinity of the Founder of the Church. On such a subject it is of supreme importance that the truth be brought into full light. To clear away from the sacred person of Christ all the mists of human prejudice, and to bring Him into direct contact with the conscience, is the first duty of the defender of the faith. In presence of the eternal and living Word, confidence in the intrinsic force of the divine is at least as well founded as when the subject treated of is the written word. Thus Tertullian aims especially to exalt the majesty of the Word, and to secure its recognition, and adoration for it even in its lowest humiliation. We meet here and there in the Apology with some historical evidence adduced, but this, unfortunately, is very weak, and is founded on legendary data, such as the pretended letter of Pilate to Tiberius,‡ or on facts which are doubtful,

* "Ea expostulo, quæ tecum in hominem infers, quæ aut ex temet ipsa, aut ex quocunque auctore tuo sentire didicisti." ("De Testim. Animæ," i.)

† "Non es, quod sciam, Christiana; fieri enim non nasci soles Christiana. Tamen nunc a te testimonium flagitant Christiani, ab extranea adversus tuos." (Ibid.)

‡ "Apologia," xxi.

such as the mention in the annals of the empire of the eclipse which darkened the sun during the crucifixion.*

Tertullian is more happy when he establishes, by the Holy Scriptures, that the humiliations of Christ, which are scandal in the Jew's esteem, and folly to the Greek, formed part of the Divine plan; that they had been foretold by the Saviour Himself, and that consequently they were an element of His voluntary sacrifice.† The incarnation of the Son of God was looked for not only by the chosen people, but also by pagan humanity, as is proved by its myths and fables, which show even in their falsehoods, the reflection of the deathless hope of the human heart.‡

After tracing, in common with previous apologists, the moral effects of the new religion, Tertullian appeals to the success of the exorcisms. The witness of the demons is, according to him, so much the more worthy of belief, that it is contrary to their interest to give it, since they run the risk of losing the sacrifice, which is dearer to them than any other—the sacrifice of Christian victims. We cannot but wonder to find the author of the "Testimony of the Soul" giving weight on this point to an argument, which has no better basis than an ephemeral superstition. Thus do the noblest apologies suffer from the influence of the prejudices of their day. The more the defender of Christianity clings to the great arguments derived

* "Apologia," xxi.

† "Prædixerat et ipse ita facturos. Parum hoc, si non et prophetæ retro." (Ibid.)

‡ "Sciebant et qui penes vos ejusmodi fabulas æmulas ad destructionem veritatis istiusmodi præministraverunt." (Ibid.)

from the inner nature of Christianity itself, and from the depths of the moral being, the more deeply does he impress on his work the seal of imperishability, and the more does he raise it above the fluctuations of human knowledge, which is ever limited and variable.

All is not done when the truth of Christianity is established; it has yet to be shown that Christianity alone has any true claim to man's allegiance. In this department of his subject, the apologist has to deal with three rival influences: paganism, Judaism, and philosophy. We have already repeatedly noticed with what bitter sarcasm Tertullian speaks of the pagan religion, with what utter scorn he treats its gods, with what an unsparing hand he dashes to the dust its most venerated idols. These gods, which are no gods, which were all in the first instance men like ourselves, have become men worse than ourselves, and it would not be prudent for them to establish themselves in our cities, for they would fall under the condemnation of our most sacred laws. For the rest, it is not possible to despise them more deeply than do their own worshippers, who pretend to do them honour by the most infamous vices, and who expose them in their theatres to public derision. We need only remind the reader of those pages of burning indignation, from which we have already quoted at some length, which brand, as with a red-hot iron, those against whom they are directed.* The impotence of the pagan gods equals their vileness; they are powerless either to deliver or to punish.

Judaism, which is far above paganism, may seem

* "Apologia," x. xviii.

a more dangerous rival to the new religion. It has the advantage of professing monotheism, and the Church openly acknowledges the authority of its sacred books. But God, as Tertullian shows, passed a clear sentence of condemnation upon it, when He punished and scattered the chosen people, and the goodly heritage of the promises must needs have been transferred to a new Israel.

Philosophy, whether we consider its influence upon the life, or pass in review its various systems, all alike vague and uncertain, cannot but take much lower ground than that occupied by the religion of Christ. Tertullian goes further than this. He affirms that philosophy is less reasonable than the Gospel, and that under pretence of the freest exercise of the intellect, it demands of it larger sacrifices than the lowly religion of the Crucified. In truth, philosophy has also its mysteries, which are far more opposed to reason than are those of faith; all it has done has been to mar and deform sacred truths. It is strange that men should have been eager to accept in such a disguised and distorted shape the very ideas which, in their purest form, they reject, when they are exhibited in the full light of Christianity. When the Gospel speaks of a judgment of God, men scoff at the doctrine; but when poets and philosophers set up in the infernal regions, a tribunal before which all of human race are to appear, they are listened to with respect. The everlasting burnings with which the Gospel threatens impenitent sinners, are heard of with shouts of derisive laughter; but the fable which tells of a river of fire flowing through the abode of

the dead, meets with nothing but approbation. The paradise of the Christians is a byword of contempt; but the Elysian fields are a universally accepted vision of delight.*

If these great truths, which have the concurrent witness both of philosophy and religion, are not generally admitted, the cause is in the perversity of the human heart, which Tertullian well characterises as "the indurating effect of a wilful error, which has blunted the fine sense of the conscience." † The one thing which the apologist asks of the adversary to Christianity is, that he will purify himself; for the corruption of thought and life once earnestly renounced, he will have the pure heart which sees God; he will recognise God in the very religion which he has held accursed, and from a persecutor will become a Christian. When he comes truly to know the much reviled religion, he will no more revile, but will himself gladly embrace it.‡ How should it be otherwise, since the human soul is naturally Christian? Let it be freed from the corrupting influence of sin, let the human interpolation be erased from this divine text, and the soul's testimony will be given in favour of Christianity. The spectacle of the Christians dying at the stake and in the circus, is indeed sufficient to show that they have on their side God and the truth. We have already observed what grand expression Tertullian gives to this idea.

* "Apologia," xlvii.

† "Teneritas conscientiæ obduratur in callositatem voluntarii erroris." ("Ad Nationes," II. 1.)

‡ "Emendate vosmet ipsos prius, ut Christianos puniatis; nisi quod emendaveritis, non punietis, imo eritis Christiani. Discite quod in nobis accusetis, et non accusabitis." (Ibid., I. 19.)

His defence of Christianity concludes with that triumphal hymn of martyrdom which we have quoted, and which was a more convincing evidence than any reasoning in those days of scepticism and moral enervation, on which side was the power that must ultimately triumph.

After this outline of the Apology of the great African teacher, we can form a fair estimate both of its merits and defects. It presents to us a very remarkable chain of thought. Its main arguments sustain and strengthen one another. They cannot be accused of nullifying or destroying each other, as is too often the case when the apologist is more bent on accumulating proofs than on weighing them, Tertullian commenced by producing the immortal letter of credit of Christianity —Conscience, and he freed its testimony from all that impaired or obscured it. This universally acknowledged witness was the first he invoked, and only after its testimony had been heard, did he appeal to Scripture. His great merit lay in the admirable combination of Scriptural with moral evidence. From the former he sought only that which it can legitimately give in controversy with an unbeliever, namely, the direct and irresistible impression of the divine, resulting from the beauty and majesty of the sacred book. He carefully avoided appealing to the Scriptures as an established authority, cutting short all discussion, before conviction had been reached. That which he sought more than all else in the written word, was the living Word, the person of Christ Himself, and his great aim was to set the ideal Christ in full relief, though it must be confessed he failed to give due

prominence to His character of mercy, and we miss that soft halo of love which is the most powerful attraction of the Saviour. The moral effects of Christianity, and its power to reform the life, furnished Tertullian with a fourth argument, on which he justly laid much stress. The courage of the apostles and confessors affixes, in his judgment, the ineffaceable seal of blood to the doctrine they taught.

The feeblest part of the Apology is that which deals with the external evidence, for instead of leaning for support upon the true and glorious miracles of the Gospel, and upon the grand testimony of history, Tertullian has recourse to apocryphal prodigies, and to the confessions of poor maniacs, who supposed themselves to be possessed with demons. But he appears again in all the strength of his vehement dialectics, and with all the fire of his eloquence, when he casts at the feet of Christ all the religious and philosophic systems of the past. It is only candid, however, to admit that here he displays also his intolerance, his bitter sarcasm, and that contempt for all high culture, which deprives him of some of the most valuable arguments to be derived from the history of civilisation, and finally that intensity of passion which constitutes at once his weakness and his strength.

Among those who followed in the track of Tertullian, may be mentioned the poet Commodian, who is a severe satirist of all pagan culture; and Cyprian, who, attaching supreme importance to external authority, reproduces in a feebler form the principal argument of his illustrious master, as may be seen from his tract addressed to Donatus.

§ IV. *Third School of Apologists of the Primitive Church. The Apology of Arnobius.*

The third school of Christian apologists cannot be accused of having servilely followed in a beaten track; for they opened out an entirely new course, and effected a real revolution. The method pursued by this school is directly opposed to that of Origen and Tertullian. This will be evident from a statement of the principles from which they start, which are fully developed in the treatise of Arnobius against the pagans.

In this, as in every apologetic work, we find two distinct portions, the one devoted to positive controversy, and the other to the demonstration of the truth. Arnobius' argument is distinguished only by its violence; its principal merit is that it brings to the light the hidden vileness of paganism, and supports its allegations with much fulness of detail. Even this merit becomes a fault by its exaggeration, for the pictures which Arnobius draws are often so wanting in delicacy and purity, as to offend the sense of modesty. His style has neither the eloquent breadth of Cyprian, nor the powerful and telling conciseness of Tertullian. Arnobius directs his attacks rather against paganism in its grossest form: his mode of controversy is therefore low and vulgar; he returns insult for insult, and does not dignify, either by eloquent indignation or biting irony, arguments which are only too well adapted to the base souls whom he is addressing. He displays more moderation in his defence of Christianity, all his vehemence being reserved for the attack upon his adversaries. To

those who assert that the new religion has brought a thousand evils upon the world, he replies, with justice, that there has been no change in the aspect of terrestrial things since the appearance of Christianity. The scourges with which the world is visited now, are the same that were common prior to the Christian era.* It would be, furthermore, an insult to the ancient divinities to ascribe to them a wrath so cruel against a rival worship.† The pagans have no ground for reproaching Christians with serving a crucified Master, unless they are prepared to admit that Platonism was dishonoured by the death of Socrates. A heroic death does honour to the cause for which it is endured. Paganism itself holds in higher veneration a god who has been slain, as, for instance, Esculapius and Hercules.‡ The hatred of the pagans to Jesus Christ is so much the less to be understood that they can tolerate all the false gods and all the philosophers, while Christ alone has conferred upon mankind benefits innumerable.§ It is idle to reproach Christianity with its novelty; the religion of those who bring such an accusation is but of recent date, as they themselves admit in the books in which they record the birth of their gods.‖

From the defensive, Arnobius passes to the offensive. The last five books of his treatise are devoted to a virulent controversy with paganism, in which, however, we can discover no novel arguments. The originality of the method of Arnobius consists in this, that he labours earnestly to degrade human nature, and to set

* Arnobius, "Adv. Gentes," I. 1,.6. † Ibid., I. 17, 24.
‡ Ibid., I. 40, 41. § Ibid., I. 63. ‖ Ibid., II. 66, 70.

aside the idea of any normal relationship between it and God. He admits, indeed, that the notion of one Supreme Being is universal. "Where is the man," he says, "who has not had this idea from the very dawn of his existence? Where is the man in whom this belief in the sovereign Ruler of the universe, who orders it by His providence, has not been deeply and ineffaceably graven? Who has not brought it with him, as it were, out of his mother's womb?"* He discovers in the writings of the philosophers traces of the truths taught by Christianity, but he is careful to guard against the supposition that these notions are a direct communication of the Word to the soul, an emanation from that uncreated light which lightens every man who comes into the world. The idea of God, Arnobius does not, in fact, regard as the prerogative of man; he believes it to be equally present in insensate nature and in the lower animals. "If the dumb animals," he says, "could make themselves understood, if they could speak our language; still more, if trees, earth, and stones, were, by a sudden access of vital breath, to become capable of forming sounds and uttering articulate words, should we not hear them, in the simple and incorruptible faith which nature instils into all created things, loudly proclaim that there is but one God, the King of the universe?"† It is impossible to misunderstand this language; the idea of God entertained by man, is only an impression left by the hand of

* "Cui non sit ingenitum, non affixum . . . . esse regem ac dominum cunctorum quæcumque sunt moderatorem." (Arnobius, "Adv. Gentes," I. 33.)

† "Ita non duce natura et magistra et intelligerent esse Deum et cunctorum dominum solum esse clamarent?" (Ibid., I. 33.)

the Creator in the clay He has moulded; it is present as much in the lower creation as in man. On the book of the human heart have been traced the same characters as on the book of nature. If man possesses the idea of God, it is not that he has any inherent sense of the divine. Instead of recognising in it the utterance of conscience, we must regard it as an idea imparted from without; from above, it is true, but still imparted in a manner wholly external, and never entering into the moral constitution of the man; it is common to all creatures. We must not, therefore, allow ourselves to be misled by isolated expressions, which give back a faint reflection of the nobler conceptions of a previous period. Nor must the following fine invocation, in which Arnobius celebrates the God whom the whole universe proclaims, mislead us as to his true idea. "O great God," he exclaims, "Creator of things not seen, Thyself invisible and past finding out, Thou art worthy to receive the unceasing homage of all that breathes and thinks, if any mortal mouth may be found worthy to pronounce Thy name. It is meet that all that lives should bow before Thee, and lift up perpetual prayer to Thee. Thou art, in truth, the great first Cause; Thou hast stretched out the space in which all things are contained; Thou art the Cause of causes; Thou art the infinite uncreated Being, without beginning and without end; Thou art the only One, who dwelleth in no corporeal form, unbounded by time or space, who art above all quality or quantity, who dost neither rest nor move, nor dost pass through any change whatever, who canst not be expressed by mortal tongue. The man who has learnt to comprehend

aught of Thee should keep silence,* and if in his roving search he has discerned but a faint shadow of Thy glory, it is not lawful for him to utter it. Pardon, O Thou King Supreme, those who persecute Thy servants; and, as becomes Thy mercy, have pity on the unhappy ones who reject Thy name and Thy religion. It is not strange that men should be ignorant of Thee; it would be stranger, indeed, did they know Thee." † This passage deserves to be quoted, not only on account of its great beauty, but also because, in spite of some appearances to the contrary, it is entirely in harmony with the system of Arnobius. The most striking feature of the invocation is the care taken by the writer to exalt only those divine attributes which are incommunicable, to mark the deep gulf between man and the Creator, and to place the Deity at such a distance from us, that there should be no natural communication between us and Him. We must observe that the separation thus dwelt upon, is not that between the fallen creature and the Most Holy. No; in this passage Arnobius distinctly affirms that God is in His essence incomprehensible, which implies that we could not originally have received any communication from this pure essence. On this point, indeed, he expresses his thought with all possible clearness in the second book. There, in presence of that God who seems as far removed from us as the God of Neo-Platonism, who is lost above the grasp of the creature and of thought in the void of His dead unity, he represents man as

* "Qui ut intelligaris, tacendum est." ("Adv. Gentes," I. 31.)

† "Non est mirum si ignoraris; majoris est admirationis, si sciaris." (Ibid.)

grovelling by nature in the dust of the earth, like the lowest of the creatures. The God of Arnobius is too far away, and man, as he regards him, is too low. This will appear from the analysis we are about to give of this leading portion of his Apology. We shall see him, in his blind desire to rob man of all native dignity, falling into the most serious errors, and raising, by his replies, objections far more weighty than those which he endeavours to remove.

Pride is assuredly a great obstacle to man's restoration, and we are ready to admit that the first duty of the apologist may be to apply to mankind those striking words from the Book of the Revelation: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."* It is perfectly legitimate to dwell upon our present wretched condition, and to cast an unsparing light upon our faults and our frailties, provided only it be shown at the same time that these rags are but the soiled and tattered fragments of a royal mantle. In other words, the apologist ought to adduce evidence of the Fall, but not to cease to regard it as a Fall, that is, as a descent from primeval greatness, and the loss of a native nobility, of which the divine traces are still discernible. His task, then, is twofold; he is bound to insist no less upon our first estate of glory and felicity than upon our present miserable condition. The contrast between the past and the present will be so much the more impressive, when man is made fully conscious of his high origin. On

* Revelation iii. 17.

the other hand, nothing is more opposed to the true purpose of a reasonable apology, than the degradation of human nature in itself, and the denial to man of any native greatness. Such a doctrine quenches in the soul every spark of repentance or high desire; it sinks it deeper in the slough into which it has fallen; it dooms man to inhale as his native air the impure atmosphere which is stifling his true life. By reflecting back on to primeval man the misery of man in his fallen state, the whole economy of the Christian religion is subverted, and its defence becomes impossible. Arnobius fell perpetually into this capital error. We should have had no ground for adverse criticism, if he had confined himself to protesting against the frivolous optimism which imagines that all is for the best in this world, as he does in these eloquent words: "If we should pretend, like some philosophers, that evil has no existence, every nation and every fraction of humanity would cry out against us, while they pointed to their wounds and to the innumerable evils which perpetually grieve and distress humanity."* But Arnobius is not satisfied with dispelling these wild illusions; he ridicules without mercy those who assert that the soul is by its nature immortal, that it is of royal and divine race, and by its original dignity stands in close relation to the Most High. He is not satisfied until he has endeavoured to show that man has been placed by God at the very foot of the scale of being.† He even goes so far as to deny the spiritual essence of the soul. It is strange to

* "Reclamabunt cunctæ gentes, universæque nationes, cruciatus nobis ostentantes suos." ("Adv. Gentes," II. 54.) † Ibid., II. 15.

see the Christian apologist thus taking his stand on the ground of the lowest materialism, with a view to reach such degrading conclusions. One might be ready to ask, where has the spiritual portion of our being hidden itself, since the dissecting knife has failed to discover in the human body anything but molecules. We find in Arnobius' book the parallel so often traced by the materialistic school, between our organism and that of the lower animals.* Wherein do we differ from them? Our bones are composed of the same materials; our origin is not more noble than theirs. Arnobius does not let slip this opportunity to speak offensively of the sacred mysteries of birth. He asks if the great concern of man, as of his brethren the animals, is not to appease his hunger, and to protect his body; † and whether he does not, like them, suffer from a thousand ills, and finally mingle his ashes with the dust of the earth? Arnobius forgets those countless religions of polytheism, of which he elsewhere so bitterly complains, and against which especially his book is directed. Whatever may be their folly or their impurity, they at least remind us that man lives not by bread alone.

Is it pleaded, he asks, that man's superiority lies in intellect and reason? But if this were the case, then mankind universally would show itself reasonable, temperate, and wise; and by such signs alone could its superiority be manifested, for man is less skilful in procuring his

* "Quid est enim, quod nos ab eorum indicet similitudine discrepare? Vel quæ in nobis eminentia tanta est, ut animantium numero dedignemur adscribi?" ("Adv. Gentes," II. 16.)

† "Quid aliud nos tantis agimus in occupationibus vitæ, nisi ut ea quæramus, quibus famis periculum devitetur." (Ibid., II. 17.)

supplies of food than many animals. If nature had given flexible hands to them as to us, they would certainly have surpassed us. The arts are, after all, not so much heavenly gifts as the results of our poverty; the spur of necessity was required to urge us on to all those fine inventions on which we so much pride ourselves. "If the soul possessed any knowledge worthy of a divine and deathless being, that knowledge would have been originally the common lot of all men.* But we find, on the contrary, that it is only groping their way along the path of slow progression, that men achieve the conquest of nature. The case is the same with art as with industry. If art were of divine origin, it would have been always and universally diffused throughout the earth, and we should not have seen artistic aptitude in its various forms so unequally distributed." We are really confounded by the absurdity of such an argument. Arnobius takes that to be a sign of inferiority which is the very seal of intellectual superiority. It is precisely because man is more than an animal, that he is born into the world the weakest and most helpless of creatures, but endowed at the same time with the infinite resources of reason, and designed to develop his own latent powers by their free exercise. Reason is not like instinct, which is identical in all the myriads of the same species; it is progressive, inventive, and consequently more or less developed according to the individual constitution and circumstances. We must

* "Quod si haberent scientias animæ, quas genus et habere divinum atque immortale condignum est, ab initio homines cuncti omnia scirent." ("Adv. Gentes," II. 18.)

go to the bee-hive or to a colony of beavers to find art and industry heaven-descended; it is man's prerogative to fashion the instruments of his own progress, and to develop the resources of the world in developing his own.

Everyone is familiar with the sublime simile of the cave in Plato's "Republic." Plunged into darkness, his limbs loaded with fetters, the miserable captive, who represents man in his actual condition, sees nothing but the dim and reversed image upon the wall of his prison, of objects he had been wont to behold in the clear light in which he had celebrated the sacred mysteries of the gods. Arnobius takes up this figure, but only to parody it egregiously. He also supposes a man shut up in a cave from his infancy, fed by a dumb nurse, and always finding ready to his hand all that he needed for the supply of his wants. Such a man would have no recollection of the glorious abode in which he may have been born; he would have no knowledge, and would be at a loss how to use his heavy limbs; he would be the most unintelligent of all created animals. Question him about himself, about the Author of his being, he would be more stupid than the beast of the field, more mute than stock or stone.* Arnobius draws the conclusion that all man's moral and intellectual wealth comes to him from without, not from within, and that it is through the senses that ideas reach him. The soul is originally a blank page, and all that it ultimately contains is inscribed on it by the outer world. The bark of the wild forest tree is not a more rough, unculti-

* "Ita ille non omni pecore, ligno, saxo obtusior atque hebetior stabit?" ("Adv. Gentes," II. 22.)

vated thing than is the human mind in its original condition. It is not man who, by his fruitful activity, renews the face of the world, it is the world that makes man what he is. There is no living animal that is not by nature more richly endowed than man, for every animal brings with it into the world at least instinct as an infallible guide. "Behold, O men," Arnobius triumphantly exclaims, "behold this soul which you assert is inherently wise, immortal, perfect, divine! * Behold this august being—man, endowed with reason, this model for the world,—behold him lower than the brute, more stupid than stock and stone! No doubt, when he has passed through the schools and received the instruction of the learned, he will become intelligent, well-informed, and will rise out of this gross ignorance. But do not the ox and the ass, by habit, and under the stimulus of necessity, learn to till the land and to grind the corn? Cease, then, to compare vile things with precious. Cease to place in the first rank and in the highest class of beings, the miserable creature—man.† He is a mendicant, destined to live in obscurity, and in the hut of the indigent, and not for the splendour of a life of nobility."

What, then, did the apostle mean when he said that we are God's offspring? The detractor of humanity does not content himself with taking from man's head the crown of immortality, he will not even admit that he has an important part to perform in the lower world, to which his ignoble origin is traced. He asks, ironically,

* "Hæc est anima docta illa, quam dicitis, immortalis, perfecta, divina." ("Adv. Gentes," II. 25.)

† "Proletarius cum sit." (Ibid., II. 29.)

what the earth would lose if it were deprived of the presence of that arrogant being who calls himself its king and benefactor? What change would there be in the earth if man had no existence?* The seasons would still succeed each other, the rain would come down to fertilise, the sun would shine to ripen. Man thinks only of himself, and gives himself no concern for the good of the world he inhabits. "Of what benefit is it to the world," asks Arnobius, "to have mighty kings, tyrants, sovereigns, and I know not what titled dignities? Of what avail to it are generals skilful in sieges, and soldiers invincible in fight, whether of infantry or cavalry? What does it gain by orators, governors, poets, writers, philosophers, musicians, jesters, actors?"† Arnobius passes in review all the arts of civilisation, and arrives at the same conclusion with regard to all. The sonorous ring of his oratory cannot conceal the absurdity of his reasoning, for if it is certain that the representation of a noble tragedy or the eloquence of a sublime discourse, will not make one grain of corn the more, it is no less certain that the high state of civilisation of which the liberal arts are an evidence, will give a general impulse to human activity, and this impulse will manifest itself in the higher cultivation of the soil, as surely as in the higher development of thought. Beside, what is the terrestrial creation without man but an incoherent phrase, unfinished and meaningless? What is the temple without the priest, or the priest without the God? Arnobius does not see that the

* "Quid ergo? Si homines non sint, ab officiis suis cessabit mundus?" ("Adv. Gentes," II. 37.)

† Ibid., II. 39–43.

whole creation thus stands in logical connection; he ignores the fact that the earth would not be fruitful if the soul of man bore no fruit, and that the soul can be fruitful only if it is of divine origin. According to his representation, not only is humanity of no use to the world, but it dishonours the world by its manifold crimes. The author details them complacently; he paints the picture in the darkest colours, and shrinks from no delineation, however hideous. He becomes really immodest in describing the shameless sensual excesses of the age. This passage, in which the tricks of bad rhetoric are blended with the obscenities of impure literature, concludes with these words: "What say you to all this, O glorious race, daughter of the Most High? Such are these souls, endowed with wisdom, which ascribe their origin to the great First Cause, such are they, wise only in every sort of malice, crime, and infamy! Doubtless it was to carry out boldly and boastingly their wicked practices, that they were sent into this portion of the universe in bodily form. What mortal, with the use of reason, can still hesitate to believe that this world was prepared expressly for his race, or, rather, that it has been prepared to be the theatre where such crimes might be daily perpetrated?" *

Arnobius thus persistently confounds the melancholy condition which is the result of the Fall, with the normal state of man, and from our actual degradation infers the baseness of our origin. Even this degradation is not so absolute as by him represented. The history of mankind would be less complicated than it

* "Adv. Gentes," II. 39–43.

is, if the power of evil reigned unopposed, and we should have, instead of conflict between good and its opposite, only the continuous and unvarying development of sin.

This miserable being—man—has his moments of greatness, when gleams of the divine flash through the darkness of his night. There have been men who, without being perfect, have done honour to their race by their wisdom and uprightness. But such exceptions cause no embarrassment to Arnobius. He replies that these men constitute an insignificant minority, and that the human race is not to be judged by this minority, but by the moral condition of the masses. "In truth, the part is comprised in the whole, not the whole in the part.* Would any one say that the earth is of gold, because in certain places veins of the precious metal have been found? Beside, even these select individuals are constrained to do incessant battle with their evil inclinations, which is a sufficient indication that the human nature which they share is in itself evil.† Arnobius would be certainly justified in concluding from these unquestionable facts that humanity is not in its normal condition, and that it is suffering from a deep-seated and universal disease; but he offers no explanation of the fact that man is still conscious of mighty impulses towards good. The presence of this moral contradiction ought to have shown him that those who, like Plato, speak of a glorious past, and of an origin of which the imperishable memory lingers with us, are not deserving of utter ridicule; it ought to

* "In toto enim est, non totum in parte." ("Adv. Gentes," II. 49.)

† Ibid., II. 50.

have convinced him that this abject being was of a noble race, and that however much he may call for pity, scorn is misplaced.

Arnobius has completed his demonstration. He has buried, as it were, the worm of the earth in the dust from which he sprang; he has endeavoured to prove that man is in nothing superior to the beasts, that his soul is not made in the image of God, and that it has no more inherent claim to immortality than the brute that crops the grass of the field. For one moment he shrinks in alarm from the results of his own argument. He hears the applause of the disciples of Epicurus, whose cause he has in reality been upholding. "Let us eat and drink," they say, "for to-morrow we die." He recoils from such a conclusion, though it is the fair sequence of his own principles, because he intends, after all, to defend Christianity. He goes on, therefore, to affirm that while the soul is not by its nature immortal, it may become so, and that God has sent His Son Jesus Christ to impart this immortality. Faith becomes in the soul the germ of eternal life.* The work of Christ is not a work of restoration, which, by bringing to us the gift of God Himself, gives back to us a lost good, for that good we never possessed; it is rather an entirely new creation, which changes a vile animal into a being in the image of the Most High. Not only were we in our primitive state entire strangers to the divine life, but we could not make any claim on God even as our Creator. Our vile clay could not have been fashioned by His glorious hands, for so miserable a work would bring dishonour on its maker. It is

* "Adv. Gentes." II. 30-32.

impossible for us to know whence we come, and what inferior *demi-urge* bestowed on us motion and being. The mystery of our origin eludes all our search and is wrapt in impenetrable darkness; we can only be silent in the consciousness of our misery.* Let the pagan please himself with the imagination that his soul has wings to soar into the eternal light.† The Christian nourishes no such idle fancies; he well knows that he would have continued to grovel in the mire, and would have finally sunk into it altogether, but for the miracle of grace. The pagan thinks to enter the palace of the Most High as he enters his own house; the Christian waits to be gathered into the dust of the ground. Thus does Arnobius blend together truth and error, and even heresy, for his notions of the creation bear the clear impress of Gnosticism. Nothing is more just than to magnify grace, nothing is more false than to set it in absolute opposition to nature, as is done by our apologist; for, by reducing man to a condition truly like that of the beasts, he does away with the possibility of any appeal to conscience. Christianity is then merely an authoritative interference with the moral life, for which no preparation has been made, and which deals with an utterly degraded being, who is dragged by terror to the foot of the cross.

The conclusion of the whole of this portion of the Apology is an unlimited scepticism. Man has within him nothing divine; he has no power, therefore, to recognise the divine without him. He is utterly impo-

* "Adv. Gentes." II. 50–63.

† "Vos alas affuturas putatis, quibus ad cœlum pergere possitis. (Ibid., II. 33.)

tent to rise to any truth of a higher order. "Let us respect," says Arnobius, "the mystery of causes. Is there any truth, clear, transparent, evident, for which the human mind has such a deep reverence that it will not attempt to disprove or dissipate it, out of mere love of contradiction? Is there any error so patent that no one is found ready to uphold it by plausible argument?"*

Arnobius makes large use, in support of his theory, of the diversity of human opinions. "All these various opinions," he says, "cannot be true, but it is not possible to discover on which side is the error, so powerfully is each sustained by argument. And yet not only do these opinions differ from each other, but they are self-contradictory. Such would not be the case if human curiosity could attain to anything certain, or if after having, as it is believed, discovered anything certain, it could obtain universal assent to it. It is the height of presumption to pretend to possess any certainty or to aspire to it, since truth itself can be refuted, or that may be accepted as real, which has no existence, as in cases of mental hallucination. It is fitting that thus it should be. We have only mere human faculties with which to appreciate and measure things divine; we have nothing divine within us." † Arnobius speaks not only of the incapacity of human reason to grasp and perfectly

* "Suis omnia relinquimus causis. Quid est enim quod humana ingenia labefactare, dissolvere studio contradictionis non audeant?" ("Adv. Gentes," II. 56.)

† "Quod utique non fieret, si certum aliquid tenere curiositas posset humana . . . Inanissima igitur res est, tanquam scias aliquid promere aut velle scire contendere . . . Et merito res ita est. Non enim divina divinis, sed rationibus pendimus et commetimur humanis." (Ibid., II. 57.)

comprehend infinite truth; he does not, like Pascal, claim a place for the moral faculties in the examination of a religion, which speaks primarily to the heart and conscience. To do this would be to accept the grand method of the Alexandrine Fathers, and so far from such a course being open to the charge of scepticism, its initial act is one of generous trust in human nature; it widens the arena of the discussion, and calls in the evidence not only of one set of faculties, but of man's whole nature. Arnobius repudiates *in toto* all such evidence; he not only denies the competence of the testimony thus rendered, but he declines it altogether; not in reason nor in conscience, nor in the heart will he recognise any divine element, which may serve as a touchstone in the matter of religion. If there is no harmony between man and truth, we maintain there is no point of moral contact between man and the Gospel, and the only appeal possible to it is to the senses, since none can reach the soul. Recourse must then be had to prodigies, in order to fascinate by a marvellous spectacle this wholly animal creature. The work may be accomplished by authoritatively crushing all resistance as with brute force, but not one step would even then be gained towards conviction or serious belief. Instead of a living soul, Christianity would have made conquest of but a dead soul, which would be incapable of negativing error, and would be convinced of but one thing, its own incapacity to discover truth. It would carry into the religion of Christ that scepticism, which unwise apologists have taken so much pains to instil into it. The curse and chastisement of sceptical tendencies enlisted in the service of religion,

is that they perpetuate themselves and do not cease at the bidding of those who have gained their purpose by them. Within the Church, as without it, they destroy the very faculty of faith, and with it the soul which has harboured them. The example of the first apologist, who relied upon these false and fatal aids, well proves the perils of such a method.

It is, indeed, startling to examine the proofs upon which Arnobius builds up the edifice of the Christian faith. It was not enough to make a heap of ruins, and to pile wreck upon wreck in order to find a solid foundation. A positive demonstration was also needed, and Arnobius has no other argument to present but that of miracle. This is with him the sole guarantee of certainty. He has trampled down the spiritual nature of man; there is, therefore, only the bodily eye left, to which he can address himself. Any appeal to conscience would be a mockery on the part of an apologist who does not even admit man to be at the head of the animal creation; he has then but one recourse—to rely on the testimony of the senses, and this he does not fail to do. "You," he says to the pagans, "may believe in Plato, in Numenius, or in whom you will; we, for our part, have given our confidence to Jesus Christ. We can render a far better reason for our attachment to His person, than you can for your belief in philosophy. We have been won to Him by His glorious works, by the effects of His great power displayed in His most divine miracles. These miracles constrain us to believe that He was more than man.* What are the miracles

* "Ac nos quidem in illo secuti hæc sumus: opera illa magnifica potentissimasque virtutes, quas variis edidit exhibuitque miraculis,

which have won your allegiance to your philosophers, and have led you to believe in them rather than in Jesus Christ? Can you cite one saying of theirs which has proved itself efficacious? Have they ever been known with a word of power, I say not to still the storm of the sea or the rage of the tempest, to restore sight to the blind or to give sight to those who were blind from their birth, to call back the dead to life, or cure inveterate diseases; but to do far easier things than these—to cure by their simple word of command the smallest tumour or scab, or to draw a pricking thorn out of a man's hand? We do not call in question the soundness of their morals or their great learning; we know well the abundant eloquence of their language, we know that they can link syllogisms closely together, and can ably draw their inductions. But what comes of all these acquirements? No enthymemes, no syllogisms, no, not all the logic in the world can assure us that they know the truth, or that they are worthy of such entire confidence that we may accept from them that which we cannot comprehend. The palm here must be given, not to eloquence, but to the argument of miracles accomplished." *

Thus, according to Arnobius, the clearest demonstration cannot weigh against such evidence as the cure of a tumour. Fanatical adherence to the external and contempt of the spiritual, can be carried to no greater length. He clings almost passionately to this sole

quibus quivis posset ad necessitatem credulitatis adduci, et judicare fideliter, non esse quæ fierent hominis, sed divinæ alicujus atque incognitæ potestatis." ("Adv. Gentes," II. 11.)

* Personarum contentio non est eloquentiæ viribus sed gestorum operum virtute pendenda." (Ibid., II. 11.)

proof, and enlarges upon it indefinitely. The picture drawn by him of the Saviour's miracles is over-coloured and in extremely bad taste; the description of the diseases healed by the Divine Master is so crudely realistic that it excites disgust. It is easy to imagine the use that might be made by an African rhetor like Arnobius, of the loathsome disease of the leper. "There has been a man among us," he says, "who by a word cured thousands of sick persons; His voice alone calmed the angry waves of the sea, and the stormy winds obeyed His command. There has been a man among us who walked dryshod in the deep furrows of the sea, and planted His foot on the crest of the astonished waves; nature was His docile instrument."* The multiplication of the loaves, the healing of the demoniacs, the resurrection of the dead, are described in an inflated style, that imparts a legendary hue to the Gospel narratives, which in their simplicity are so beautiful. That which Arnobius especially admires in the miracles, is the manifestation of a power superior to natural order, which sports with the laws of matter, and makes them subservient to its pleasure, which breaks the sequence of ordinary natural laws, and manifests its divine sovereignty.† Arnobius endeavours to place the reality of these miracles beyond dispute. He adduces three proofs. The testimony of the apostles is the first guarantee of the Gospel miracles; they were themselves the witnesses of the events they record, and they are the more worthy to be believed that they also wrought the same prodigies.‡ The second testimony appealed to is

* "Adv. Gentes," I. 45. † Ibid., I. 47.

‡ "Qui ea conspicati sunt fieri, testes optimi." (Ibid., I. 54.)

that of mankind; yes, of that incredulous race of man, which could not withstand evidence clearer than the sun. The Gospel can show over the whole world thousands of adherents gained by the power of the truth.* If the first Christians had not themselves wrought dazzling miracles in the sight of the pagans, converts would not have hazarded their lives for the sake of a decried doctrine.† It was not possible that all these prodigies should be committed to writing; many have been preserved by oral tradition, which are not recorded in our sacred books. As to these sacred books themselves, they bear in their very roughness and inexactness the stamp of truthfulness,‡ and they remove any lingering doubt from the mind. The testimony of Scripture is therefore the third guarantee for the miraculous events which are the basis of faith.§

Arnobius, with strange inconsistency, concludes his book with bitter reflections on the unbelief of mankind. But if it be true that man is by nature no higher than the brutes, and that there is nothing divine in him, it is very excusable that he should feel far more keenly physical sufferings than moral maladies, and should be more eager to find a physician for the body than for the soul. The work of the spiritual physician must be, indeed, rather to create souls as it were, than to heal them, since they have no real existence, if they are not immortal in their essence, and before the coming of the physician have no part in the higher life. In fact, the creation of man is, on Arnobius's theory, effected in two acts, separated by a vast

* "Et incredulum illud genus humanum." ("Adv. Gentes," I. 54.)
† Ibid. I. 55. ‡ Ibid., I. 58, 59. § Ibid., I. 52.

interval. The clay of which his bodily organism is formed was fashioned in the beginning of the world, but the breath of the divine life was only communicated to him at the appearing of Christ. It cannot be strange that such a mere creature of clay should have felt no thrill of joy or expectation at the drawing near of the Son of God, that He should have owned no attraction in His person, and should have rejected Him as not adapted to his nature. The lower is man's origin, the more excusable is his unbelief; for in the realm of morals pre-eminently does the maxim hold: "Noblesse oblige." No one ever dreams of reproaching the brute creation with their insensibility to the presence of the Incarnate Word. And if man is but another animal, he may justly claim a similar exemption from blame. Thus the apologists who dishonour humanity, teach anything but a lesson of humility. They degrade and reassure it in the same breath, and alienate it from Christianity alike by the scathing brand they set upon it, and by the excuses with which they furnish it. This melancholy school of apologists condemns itself, since it ends by compromising that which it aims to defend. As we read Arnobius, we could almost imagine again and again that we were listening to the words of Celsus, so near does he approach to the great scoffer, in his depreciation of human nature. He seems like an advocate who has mistaken his brief, and by the most singular inadvertence has taken up the cause of the adverse party. It is not difficult to foretell the issue of such strange proceedings as these on the part of the defenders of Christianity.

Unhappily, Arnobius writes at the close of the heroic age of the Church, on the eve of the establishment of Christianity as the imperial and official religion, under which every evil tendency would be fostered, and the sword placed at the service of the new religion. Man, as Arnobius conceived of him, despoiled of his native dignity, without the independence springing from an inalienable divine relationship, was the fit subject, or rather the docile slave, required by the religious and political despotism, which was about to lay its heavy yoke upon the Church and the world. Mankind thus regarded was nothing better than inert matter, malleable clay, to be wrought upon by the twofold tyranny, of which the reign began with the Eastern Empire of Constantine and his successors. The psychological system of Origen and Tertullian would not have subserved the ends of spiritual tyranny, for under the influence of that great school, conscience rose up invincible against every aggression, in the strength of its God-given freedom and right.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Note A.

On the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians.

Hœfele ("Prolegom.," p. 36, 38) asserts that the Epistle to the Corinthians must have been written immediately after the death of Peter and Paul. He grounds his opinion on the following passage: "Ελθωμεν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔγγιστα γενομένους ἀθλητὰς. ("Epist. ad Corinth.," v.) But it is impossible to determine exactly what Clement intended by ἔγγιστα. It is evident that, compared with the saints of the old covenant, of whom Clement also speaks, the apostles are very little removed from him. The description of the Jewish worship (c. xl. and xli.) seems, in Hœfele's opinion, to imply that the Temple had not yet been destroyed; but Clement might perfectly well be referring to the Levitical worship described in the Scriptures, although that worship had already ceased to be offered. The description of the persecution, the same writer holds to refer to the persecution under Nero. But Clement may well have been speaking in this passage of all the persecutions of the first century, and calling them rapidly to mind. (See Ritschl, "Altcatholische Kirche," p. 286.)

The objections to the date suggested by us seem, therefore, in no way conclusive.

On the other hand, in favour of that date, there are abundant reasons in the letter itself. The Church of Corinth has already a considerable past history. ("Epist. ad Corinth.," i.) Many of the elders appointed by the apostles are dead (c. xliv.) The rest are advanced in age. The death of Peter and Paul is, however, placed in that generation; that is to say, within the last thirty years. All this points to the apostolic age. (Helgenfeld, "Apostoliche Væter," p. 83.)

The testimonies of the Fathers in favour of the high antiquity of the Epistle of Clement, are many and weighty. We mention only the principal: Irenæus, "Adv. Hæres.," iii. 83; Clement of Alexandria, "Stromat.," i. 7; Origen, "De Principiis, ii. 3; Eusebius, "H. E.," III. xvi. (See the passages *in extenso* in Cotelier.)

The spuriousness of the second epistle of Clement is now put beyond a doubt. Eusebius, who is the first to mention it, says that the elders made no use of it: "Οτι μηδὲ τοὺς ἀρχαίους αυτῷ κεχρημένους ἴσμεν. ("H. E.," III. xxxviii.) Neither St. Jerome nor Photius allude to it.

Note B.

On the Letters of Ignatius.

No subject has given rise to more discussion than this. An entire volume would be needed to deal with it fully ; we can only very briefly give our reasons in favour of the authenticity of the three letters of Ignatius in the Syriac translation. Let us first touch on the historical side of the question. In the fifth century there were extant, first, eleven, and soon after fifteen letters in Latin alone, said to be by Ignatius ;* the first eleven letters shortly appeared in Greek. Bishop Usher discovered in 1644 two Latin MSS., one at Cambridge, which contained the seven letters of Ignatius mentioned by Eusebius, in a much more concise form. Isaac Vossius, two years laters, found the Greek text of this same edition of the letters of Ignatius, with the exception of the Epistle to the Romans, which Ruinart read in 1698, in a MS. at Paris, containing the "Acts of the Martyrdom of Ignatius." Here, then, were two texts of his epistles—the one long and diffuse, the other much more condensed. The latter did not seem of unquestionable authority, and the illustrious Daillé set himself to call in question the genuineness of the seven letters mentioned by Eusebius.† His book is a masterpiece of criticism ; in it he displays true genius, and discovers for himself some of the most skilful methods of modern criticism. He handles the internal evidence in a manner really remarkable ; he dwells on the style and the history of doctrine and heresy, as well as on the sentiments of the writer, in order to prove with equal vigour and logic, the impossibility of ascribing to Ignatius the letters which bear his name. He has himself well defined his critical method thus : "Ne quid scriberet quod non ad Christianam fidem constituendam et ad pietatem confirmandam utile conditum, etiam ut ea diceret quæ ad proprium Ignatii ingenium, mores, institua, facta actaque quam proxime accideret" (p. 432).

Daillé clearly establishes that Ignatius could not have combated in the year 107, heresies which had no definite existence till the middle of the second century, nor have given expression to the theory of an episcopal monarchy, at a period when it is notorious that the identity of the bishop and the elder was still maintained. The error of the learned critic consists in not having distinguished with sufficient clearness between the two texts attributed to Ignatius. Bishop Pearson replied in a voluminous work, entitled, "Vindiciæ epistolarum sancti Ignatii ;"‡ in his work he displays both science and resolute purpose, as he follows his adversary step by step. After a very long discussion of the testimony of the Fathers, he

* The names of these epistles are : to the Trallians, to the Magnesians, to the Church of Tarsus, to the Christians of Philippi, of Philadelphia, of Smyrna, of Antioch, of Ephesus, and of Rome ; the letters to Polycarp, and to Nero ; two letters to St. John, an epistle to the Virgin, and lastly the letter to Maria Cassabolita. All these are found in the second volume of Cotelier.

† Johannis Dallæi, "De Scriptis quæ sub Dyonisii areopagitæ et Ignatii nominibus circumferuntur." Libri duo. Geneva, 1666.

‡ Oxford edition, 1652, second volume. The same work is inserted in Cotelier's second volume.

proceeds to the internal evidence; he makes incredible efforts to trace back to the commencement of the second century the heresies and episcopal notions of the third. After this introductory controversy, the disputants divided into two theological camps. While Neander expressed a prudent doubt, Rothe lent his extensive learning and his great talent to the cause defended by Pearson. (See the passage devoted to the epistles of Ignatius in the "Anfænge der Christ. Kirche.") The Tübingen school endeavoured to show the spuriousness of the letters of Ignatius, in order to support its own favourite propositions. (Schwegler, "Nachapost. Zeitalt.," ii. 159.) The whole controversy was revived by the discovery made in 1839 by Tattam, in a monastery of the desert of Nitri, of three Syriac manuscripts, containing the Epistles to Polycarp, that to the Romans, and that to the Ephesians, in a very concise form. Another Syriac manuscript, discovered in 1847, reproduces precisely the same text. These discoveries, edited by Cureton, were published.* Bunsen issued in Greek the three letters of the Syriac edition in his "Antenicæna." † While Hœfele, on the part of the Catholics,‡ and Baur § and Helgenfeld,‖ on the part of the Tübingen school, dispute the authenticity of the Syrian text, Bunsen,¶ Ritschl,** and Lepsius,†† defend it by very weighty arguments. A young Genevese theologian, M. Pierre Vaucher, published, in 1856, a very learned treatise on this subject. To us, however, it seems to have the effect of singularly weakening the arguments brought forward by the advocates of the genuineness of the Syriac text. ‡‡ For our own part we are fully convinced, on the following grounds, that Cureton has given us the genuine Ignatius.

1st. We remark that prior to Eusebius ("H. E.," III. xxxiv.) no evidence can be brought forward from the Fathers, in support of a single passage of the ancient Greek text of Ignatius. Irenæus ("Adv. Hæres.," v. 28) quotes a passages from the Epistle to the Romans, which is found in the two editions of Ignatius (*Σῖτός εἰμι θεοῦ*). Origen cites a passage from the Epistle to the Ephesians, which is in the Syriac (*Ἔλαθε τὸν ἄρχοντα τοῦ αἰῶνος ἡ παρθενία*, "Homilia," VI., "In Luc."), and this other passage from the Epistle to the Romans, which also occurs in the Syriac: "Meus autem amor crucifixos est." ("Prolog. in Cantic. cantic.") Whatever Pearson may say, it cannot but appear unaccountable that Irenæus, who is so glad to strengthen his position by the testimony of his predecessors, should not have cited the passages in which Ignatius opposes the same heretics as he himself, if those passages had been before his eyes.

2nd. A comparison of the shortest Greek text with the Syriac, is in itself sufficient to prove the priority of the latter. So far from the Syriac having the incoherent character of an unintelligent extract, as Helgenfeld

* "Corpus Ignatianum." W. Cureton, London, 1849.
† "Antenicæna," I. 43-53.
‡ "Patrum Apost. Opera," third edition, p. 58.
§ "Die Ignatianischer Briefe und ihre neuesten Kritiker."
‖ "Apostolische Væter," p. 274-279.
¶ "Ignatius von Antiochien und seine Zeit." Bunsen, 1847.
** "Altcatholische Kirche," p. 418.
†† "Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie," 1856. First edition.
‡‡ See also M. Réville's articles in the journal, "Le Lien." 1856.

asserts, it is full of force and manly vigour, and if it is not free from obscurity, that is no sufficient ground for rejecting it. Lepsius gives a detailed comparison of the two texts, which seems to enable us to lay our finger on the system of the interpolator. Let the more extensive Greek text be studied in Cotelier (ii. 451-28); let it be compared with the abridged Greek text published by Vossius, and the same relation will be perceived between them as between the Greek of Vossius and the Syriac. Let the Epistle to the Ephesians, for example, be compared in the text of Vossius with the same Epistle in the Syriac. In the one all is simple, broad, full of restrained power; the other is lax and diffuse. Thus, in the Syriac, Ignatius contents himself with expressing his gratitude to the Ephesians for sending to him their bishop (c. i.), while in the Greek we have five chapters making use of the occasion to lay down the most monarchical theories of episcopacy (c. iii. to viii.) The Syriac subsequently gives some earnest exhortations, full, at the same time, of firmness and gentleness. In the Greek these are drowned in fierce invectives against the heretics (cviii. ix.), and in prolix dissertations. But the interpolation is still more palpable at the end of the Epistle. The Syriac simply speaks of the star which announced the reign of the Saviour. The Greek develops this theme after the manner of the Apocryphal Gospels. "A star," it says, "shone in the heavens, surpassing in glory every other star; its light was ineffable, and its strangeness threw men into consternation. All the other stars, with the sun and moon, formed a train to this star; it cast its light over all. ("Ad Eph.," xix.) Such a passage as this bears the unmistakeable mark of a fabrication. A comparison of the two other Greek letters with the Syriac gives the same result. As to the four supposed letters, they are composed on the system of the interpolations of the three genuine letters, and give the same tokens of the hand of the forger. (The analysis of these may be seen in Bunsen's "Ignatius und seine Zeit," p. 64.)

3rd. Considered from a doctrinal point of view, the Syriac bears the character of far greater antiquity than the Greek. If Lepsius goes too far in imputing a sort of patripassianism to the former, it is nevertheless certain that the manner in which it speaks of Jesus Christ leads to the supposition that the author was ignorant of the problems of Christology started by theologians from the middle of the second century, with reference to the person of the Redeemer. The Greek text is incomparably more exact and more dogmatic. Thus, while the Syriac simply says ("Ad Eph.," i.) that He who was invisible became visible for our salvation, the Greek enters into an expansion of the doctrine, such as the following: "There is one sole physician, clothed in human flesh, and yet spiritual, made and not made (γενέτος καὶ ἀγένετος), God existing in man, true life in death, born of Mary and of God, once subject to suffering, now impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord." ("Ad Eph." vii., comp. "Ad Trall.," ix.; "Ad Smyrn.," i.; "Ad Magnes.," xi.) The heresies indicated in a very general manner in the Syriac, are characterised in the minutest detail in the Greek text, which designates them under the unmistakeable traits of Gnostic docetism. Now, this docetism did not assume such definite form till a far later period. Cerinthus did not deny the humanity of Jesus Christ; he only denied that

the humanity was united with the divinity. But the docetes spoken of in the Greek epistles, regard that humanity as nothing more than a semblance.* We may add that the tone of the Syriac, in speaking of the heretics, is moderate, while that of the Greek is bitter and violent. The Greek goes even so far as to speak of the heretics as *wild beasts* in the letter to the Ephesians (c. vii.) ;† the Syriac uses far different language in the Epistle to Polycarp. "If thou lovest only the good disciples," it says, "thou art wanting in grace. Bear gently with the most evil." ‡

4th. There is a great difference between the Syriac and the Greek with regard to ecclesiastical organisation, and we discover here (but in favour of the Syriac) that which Daillé called the *palmarium argumentum*—the triumphant argument. In fact, it is not necessary to prove that the Greek establishes a marked difference between the elders and the bishop, and gives full expression to the episcopal theory. It exalts the *office* far above the person. The bishop, according to the Greek, is invested with an apostolic character (ἐν ἀποστολικῷ χαρακτήρι, subscription of the letter to the Trallians). He is positively the vicar of God and of Jesus Christ. ("Ad Magnes.," iii. vi.) To obey the bishop is to obey the will of God. ("Eph.," iii. iv.) It is he who directs the worship. ("Ad Smyrn.," viii.) We are brought into the presence of a fully developed episcopal organisation. It is impossible to reconcile such language with that of Clement of Rome, of Polycarp, or of the "Shepherd of Hermas." In the Syriac, nothing of the sort appears. Bunsen and Lepsius justly remark, that if a larger measure of influence is accorded to the bishop in the Syriac text than in the other writings of the Apostolic Fathers, it is not the influence so much of the office as of the personal character of the bishop. The first two chapters of the Epistle to Polycarp show how strenuously Ignatius urges the bishop to the fulfilment of his duties. In the Epistle to the Romans (c. iv.) we see that Ignatius wrote at a time when the episcopal theory was still in embryo, and only a certain degree of precedence was accorded to one of the elders above the rest ; a long period had to elapse before this germ of episcopacy developed into the complete form it presents in the Greek.

5th. The interpolations of the Greek text are very evident in the legendary additions made to the Syriac in the details of Ignatius' journey, and of the feelings of the martyr. The Syriac simply shows us the Bishop Onesimus by the side of Ignatius ("Ad Eph.," i.), joined afterwards by some deputies from the churches ("Rom.," xx.) According to the Greek text, he presides over regular assemblies of the Church, and conducts formal discussions. ("Philadelphia," vii. viii.) The heretics dispute with him. ("Ad Smyrn.," vii.) The Syriac, at the close of the letter to Polycarp, speaks in very simple terms of a Christian who was sent to Antioch, who is probably the successor of Ignatius. The Greek (c. vii. vii.) conjures up a whole series of ambassadors, appointed by the Churches to communicate with one another. Even Ignatius himself does not appear to us in the same light in the Syriac and the Greek. The former shows him

* Λέγουσιν τὸ δοχεῖν πεπονθέναι αὐτού. ("Ad Smyrn.," ii.)
† Ὡς θηρία. ‡ Τοὺς γοιμοτέρους ὑπότασσε. ("Ad Poly.," i.)

blending gentleness with firmness; the latter represents him as a fanatic and violent man; it exaggerates his humility, and makes him say, in his Epistle to the Romans, that he is ashamed to be called a Christian. ("Rom.," vii.) From a comparison of the two texts, the priority of the Syriac is to us established beyond a doubt.

Baur and Helgenfeld pretend to discover in the letters of Ignatius, even in the Syriac text, the impress of Gnosticism, and they cite, in support of this opinion, the doctrine therein contained on the nature of angels. They bring forward the expression ἄρχην τοῦ κοσμοῦ ("Ad Eph.," iii.), but this is evidently an expression taken from Scripture. (See 2 Cor., iv. 4.) The word πλήρωμα (the subscription of the Epistle to the Ephesians) brings to mind Col. i. 19. The Syriac does not on any of these points go beyond the Epistle to the Ephesians, the genuineness of which we have already proved.

Note C.

On the Authenticity of the "Philosophoumena." *

However diverse may be the results arrived at by criticism with regard to the "Philosophoumena," one thing at least is definitely established—the high antiquity of the document. All the writers who have taken up the question are unanimous in their decision that the writer lived in the third century, and that consequently he had direct knowledge of the facts he narrates. It is certain that Theodoret had before him at least the last two books of the "Philosophoumena." He borrowed largely from them in his "History of Heresies" (Theodoret, i. 14-19; ii. 7), especially with reference to the heresy of Callisthus (iii. 3).

We are not satisfied with affirming merely the antiquity of the document. We are prepared to maintain that it is really the work of St. Hippolytus. Let us first call to mind the subjects treated in the "Philosophoumena." The first book, which we already possess in Père de la Rue's edition of

* We already possess an entire literature on this important subject. We quote the principal works or articles:

"Hippolytus und seine Zeit," von Christian Carl Josias Bunsen. Leipsic, Brockhaus, 1852. The same book in English, second edition, 1854.

"Hippolytus und Callistus," von Dœllinger, Regensburg, 1853.

"Hippolytus und die Rœmischen Zeitgenossen." Von Volkmar. Zurich, 1855.

"St. Hippolytus and the Church of Rome." Wordsworth, 1852.

"Etude sur les nouveaux documents historiques empruntés a l'ouvrage recemment découvert des Philosophoumena." Par M. l'Abbé Cruice. Chez Périsse frères. Paris, 1853.

The text was first published by Mr. Milner, at Oxford, in 1851. M. l'Abbé Cruice published it in Paris (1859) with translation and commentaries.

We may refer lastly to:

Articles in the "Correspondant." By M. l'Abbé Freppel and by M. Ch. Lenormant. Paris, 1853. Pp. 502-553.

Articles by Baur—"Jahrbücher." 1853. Parts 1 and 3, article by Geiseler—"Studien und Kritiken." 1853. Part 4, article by Jacobi—"Deutshe Zeitschrift." June 21, 1851.

Origen, is a calm and methodical exposition of the principal philosophies of Greece. The author designs to establish that all the heresies had been derived by their founders from this source. The next book, which was the fourth of the complete work, is devoted to treating the widely spread errors of astrology. Book V. makes us acquainted with the most ancient heresies, in which we may trace the as yet formless germ of Gnosticism. The sixth book continues the same subject, and preserves for us a valuable fragment of the writing of Valentinus. The doctrine of Basilides, Marcion, Cerinthus, Tatian, Montanus, and other heretics is expounded in the seventh and eighth book. The ninth carries us into the heart of the Church of Rome, and in it the author's contest with the two Bishops, Zephyrinus and Callisthus, is vividly depicted. Lastly, the tenth book gives an epitome of the whole work, and concludes with a very beautiful confession of faith. Evidently the writer of the "Philosophoumena" is a man profoundly versed in ancient philosophy, and able to estimate with a full knowledge of cause and effect, the dogmatic differences of his day. He is also a man of sufficient independence of spirit to enter into controversy with the Bishop of Rome, and his confession of faith betokens a large and lofty intellect. We may add that his book constantly shows traces of the influence of Irenæus. It is evident that he has the work of Irenæus before him. Now, if we compare all these indications with that which we know from history about Hippolytus, we shall find we have made a great step towards the settlement of the question under debate. All the ecclesiastical writers who mention Hippolytus agree in praising his competence in matters of philosophy. We know that he wrote a book on Plato. We know further that he took especial cognisance of the heresies of his age, and that he was considered to be a disciple of Irenæus. The paschal cycle engraved upon his episcopal chair, proves his aptitude in treating the subject contained in the fourth book, for a very extensive acquaintance with astronomy was required for such a vigorous controversy with pagan astrology. Lastly, we learn from two verses of Prudentius, that it was in the memory of Christian antiquity that Hippolytus had a contest with the Bishop of Rome. Every indication which we can gather with reference to the author of the "Philosophoumena" from the work itself, applies perfectly to St. Hippolytus as he was known to us before the discovery of that valuable document. Surely there is here very substantial evidence, or at the least a very strong presumption, in support of our opinion.

It may fairly be asked, however, whether there was no other Christian teacher in the third century to whom these characteristics might apply. Our adversaries have asserted that such is the case, and before going further we will dispose of their theories. Three names have been mentioned, those of Origen, Caius, and Tertullian. Mr. Miller, the learned editor of the "Philosophoumena," and M. Charles Lenormant, support the first hypothesis. They do so on these grounds: that the manuscript bore the name of Origen; that the first book was inserted by the Benedictines among his works; and lastly, that the vast theological and philosophical learning of the doctor of Alexandria point to him as the author. We can well understand that it would be a great satisfaction to the Roman Catholic Church if it could be established that Origen was the author of the "Philosophoumena,"

since in the estimation of that Church the authority of Origen as that of one accused of heresy, is *nil*. But this theory has so little to sustain it, that even Catholic writers like Dœllinger and the Abbé Cruice have combated it with invincible arguments. The name of Origen, inserted in the margin of the manuscripts, proves absolutely nothing. We know what was the ignorance of the convent scribes; nor is there any evidence that the copyist intended more than simply to refer to Origen one of the special opinions of the book. There arises, however, a more serious difficulty: the author of the "Philosophoumena" declares most positively that he was a bishop.* Now, Origen never was a bishop. The author makes a sojourn in Rome, and has charge of a Church in that city. Origen, on the testimony of Eusebius, only passed through Rome.† Finally, the doctrine of the writer differs completely from that of Origen on one main point. We know what importance Origen attached to the idea of the final restoration of all, and how strongly he denied eternal punishment. The author of the "Philosophoumena," on the contrary, affirms it categorically.‡

Are the advocates of the second hypothesis more successful? Was Caius the author of the "Philosophoumena?" This is the opinion of Baur. He relies on the indirect testimony of Photius. ("Bibl. Cod.," 48.) The patriarch attributed to Caius a book "On the Universe." Now, the writer of the "Philosophoumena" claims the authorship of a book on this subject; and Baur draws the conclusion that Caius is the author of both. Photius himself, however, was careful to guard his assertion by saying he could not arrive at any certainty on this point of criticism.§ More than this, the details which Eusebius gives us with reference to Caius are incompatible with the composition of the "Philosophoumena." Caius was an elder of the Church of Rome, under Zephyrinus and Callisthus. (Eusebius, "H. E.," II. xxv.) He is known to have successfully opposed the Montanists. Is it conceivable that in all the heat of the conflict, he should have spoken of his adversaries with the calmness and brevity with which they are treated in the sixth book of the manuscript? Eusebius asserts ("H. E.," II. xxviii.) that Caius went so far in his opposition to the Montanists as to deny the authenticity of the Revelation, and to ascribe its authorship to the heretic Cerinthus. Our writer, on the contrary, has no doubt of its apostolic character.‖ We hold it, then, to be impossible that Caius should have written the "Philosophoumena."

A French theologian has hazarded, not without some hesitation, a third hypothesis, which has no claim to detain us long. M. l'Abbé Cruice, now Bishop of Marseilles, who has brought out a new edition of the "Philosophoumena," with a commentary and a translation, suggests the name of Tertullian as the author of the manuscript. It would be, indeed, a boon to the defenders of the hierarchy, could they ascribe to the fiery teacher of Carthage, who became a heretic, the stern words of the ninth book. Callisthus would then appear as the representative only of moderation and wisdom,

* Ἀρχιερατείας τε καὶ διδασκαλίας μετέχοντες. ("Phil.," p. 3.)
† Ἐνθα οὐ πολὺ διατρίψας. (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xiv.)
‡ Ἀγγελῶν κολαζῶν ὕμμα ἀεὶ μένον. ("Phil.," p. 39.)
§ Οὔπω μοὶ γέγονεν εὔδηλον.
‖ Τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα διὰ τῆς Ἀποχαλύψεως Ἰωάννης ἤλεγχε. ("Phil.," p. 258.)

and Tertullian would still be the passionate tribune, whose eloquence might deserve admiration, but whose testimony was of no authority or weight. Unhappily this agreeable solution of the question presents some difficulties. First of all, supposing that Tertullian would have written in Greek, it would certainly not have been in comparatively correct Greek. Then, he would not have spoken of Montanism as heresy. He would not have treated philosophy with such lofty moderation. The writer, who in the fifth book of his "Prescriptions" has nothing but insults for the great philosophers of Greece, who cannot restrain his indignation, and who exclaims, *Miserum Aristotelicem!* would not have set forth with so much calmness the opinions of the Aristotelians, and certainly he would not, in his peroration, have borrowed from Socrates the *γνῶθι σεαύτον*. Again: he would certainly not have placed among the accusations brought against Callisthus, the introduction of second baptism ("Philo.," p. 291), after having himself ardently advocated it in a special treatise. M. l'Abbé Cruice discovers a certain analogy between the views of Tertullian and those of the unknown author of the "Philosophoumena" as to the person of Jesus Christ; but who does not know that, before the Council of Nicæa, the subordination of the Son to the Father was very generally acknowledged? It might as well be asserted that Tertullian and Origen belonged to the same school. But even if we had not all these grounds for rejecting the hypothesis of M. l'Abbé Cruice, it would suffice to read a couple of pages of Tertullian and then any portion, however short, of the "Philosophoumena." Tertullian might almost be said to put his name to every line of his writings. The whole man appears in every page, with all his passion, power, indignation, and sublime imagination, perpetually pitting thought against thought, word against word, in the sharp conflict of antitheses. We find nothing like this in the somewhat slow and careful method of the author of the "Philosophoumena." In fact, internal evidence must be for ever abandoned if this manuscript is really from the pen of Tertullian.

With these weighty objections to Origen, Caius, and Tertullian, it seems to us difficult to controvert the opinion we have advanced. Is there any reason for asserting, as does M. l'Abbé Cruice, that if Tertullian is not the author, the book must have been composed by some unknown heretic? We should then need to inquire how it was that a man of such power, should have been undiscovered at Rome in the third century? Where could this anonymous teacher have hidden himself, who knew so intimately well the Church of his time, and who had mental powers so distinguished and so highly cultivated? It must be confessed that he made use of a treacherous art, since he so perfectly identified himself with St. Hippolytus, as to succeed in thinking his identical thoughts and writing with his pen.

We have three conclusive proofs of the authenticity of the document to advance.

1st. The ancient historians of the Church declare that St. Hippolytus wrote a book on heresies. Eusebius says distinctly that this book was *against all the heresies.** Epiphanius entirely agrees with him on this

* *Πρὸς ἁπάσας τὰς αἱρεσεὶς.* (Eusebius, "H. E.," VI. xxii.)

point.* He places Hippolytus in the same rank with Clement of Alexandria, and Irenæus.

2nd. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, says in his "Bibliotheca," c. cxxiv., that he was acquainted with a writing of St. Hippolytus on the heresies. He gives a tolerably complete description of this writing, and one is struck, on reading it, with the differences and analogies existing between the work thus described and the "Philosophoumena." The differences, however, are but superficial; the analogy of the subject-matter is evident. The subject is the same. Both books treat of the heresies of the early ages. If the number of the heresies mentioned does not exactly agree, there is yet no shadow of doubt that in both works they were arranged in the same manner, in the same order, and with the same arguments. Lastly, Photius speaks of the book which he is analysing as standing in the same relation of dependence to the work of Irenæus, which is patent in our manuscript. So far we have discovered no difference between the two writings, except that in the number of the heresies. Photius suggests a more serious difficulty when he speaks of the treatise on the heresies as a little book (*βιβλιδάριον*). The "Philosophoumena," originally consisting of ten books, certainly is something more than a little book. M. de Bunsen attempts, in a rather artificial manner, to establish the identity of the "Philosophoumena" with the book known to Photius. For ourselves, we share the opinion of Dœllinger and Wordsworth. We suppose that there were two writings of Hippolytus on the same subject; the one more extensive, which would be the "Philosophoumena," the other an abridgment of the same, which would be the *βιβλιδάριον* of Photius. This is not a mere baseless supposition. There is a solid foundation for it in our manuscript itself, for we read in the introduction that the "author had already treated of the various heresies in a more concise manner." † Can there be any reason to doubt that this shorter treatise is precisely that referred to by Photius? We know that Hippolytus wrote on the same heresies treated in the "Philosophoumena," that he did so in the same spirit—the spirit of Irenæus—and yet further, that he arranged them in the same order. The author of the "Philosophoumena," on his part, states that he had written a book on the same subject, but shorter. It is evident that this coincidence amounts to a proof.

3rd. The statue of Hippolytus furnishes us with one last and still more decisive proof. We have said that the list of the works of the illustrious teacher is engraved on his episcopal chair. Among them is one entitled, "On the Universe," *περὶ τοῦ παντός*. Now, the author of the "Philosophoumena" states that he had written a treatise on the Universe, *περὶ τοῦ παντός*. "Those who desire it," he says, "may find fuller developments of this subject in our treatise on the essence of the Universe." ‡ The

* "Heresies," xi. 33.

† *Ὧν καὶ παλαί μετρίως τὰ δόγματα ἐξεθέματα.* ("Phil.," p. 2.)

‡ *Περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντός οὐσίας.* ("Phil.," p. 334.) In opposition to this, is adduced the testimony of Photius, that this treatise on the Universe was by Caius; but we have already seen in what vague and inconclusive terms he speaks on the subject. (See p. 18.)

"Philosophoumena" tells us, then, that their author wrote a treatise on the Universe. This treatise on the Universe is placed in the list of the writings of Hippolytus inscribed on his statue. Is it not then patent that the "Philosophoumena" is his also? *

The demonstration appears to us irresistible, and in the objections urged against it we see no real force. The silence of historians upon the internal crisis of the Church of Rome is not strange, if we remember that these writers all belonged to the Eastern Church, which was still of the most importance. Nor are they indeed entirely silent, for Theodoret speaks of the heresy of Callisthus. Then the crisis was of short duration. The martyrdom of Callisthus obliterated his faults. The disappearance of the writing of Hippolytus was not total. Theodoret was acquainted with a portion of it. We have confined ourselves to this question of the authenticity of the manuscripts, for we do not wish to avail ourselves, like our adversaries, of doubtful documents.

* We may allude to a few more of the objections urged by M. l'Abbe Cruice. He asserts that the title Περὶ τοῦ παντὸς is too vague to warrant the inference that it refers to the same work mentioned on the statue, especially as the title here is more complete, and contains an allusion to Plato. But how could a man so well versed as the author of the "Philosophoumena" in ancient philosophy, have spoken of the *essence of the universe* without taking up and opposing Platonist ideas, of which he treats so much throughout his work? M. Cruice lays especial stress in his argument, on the differences between the writing spoken of by Photius and our manuscript; but our supposition, that there were two analogous writings of the same author, obviates these objections. M. l'Abbé Cruice finally urges what he describes as the poverty of the book, in his view nothing but a miserable compilation. It is needless to discuss such an estimate as this.

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